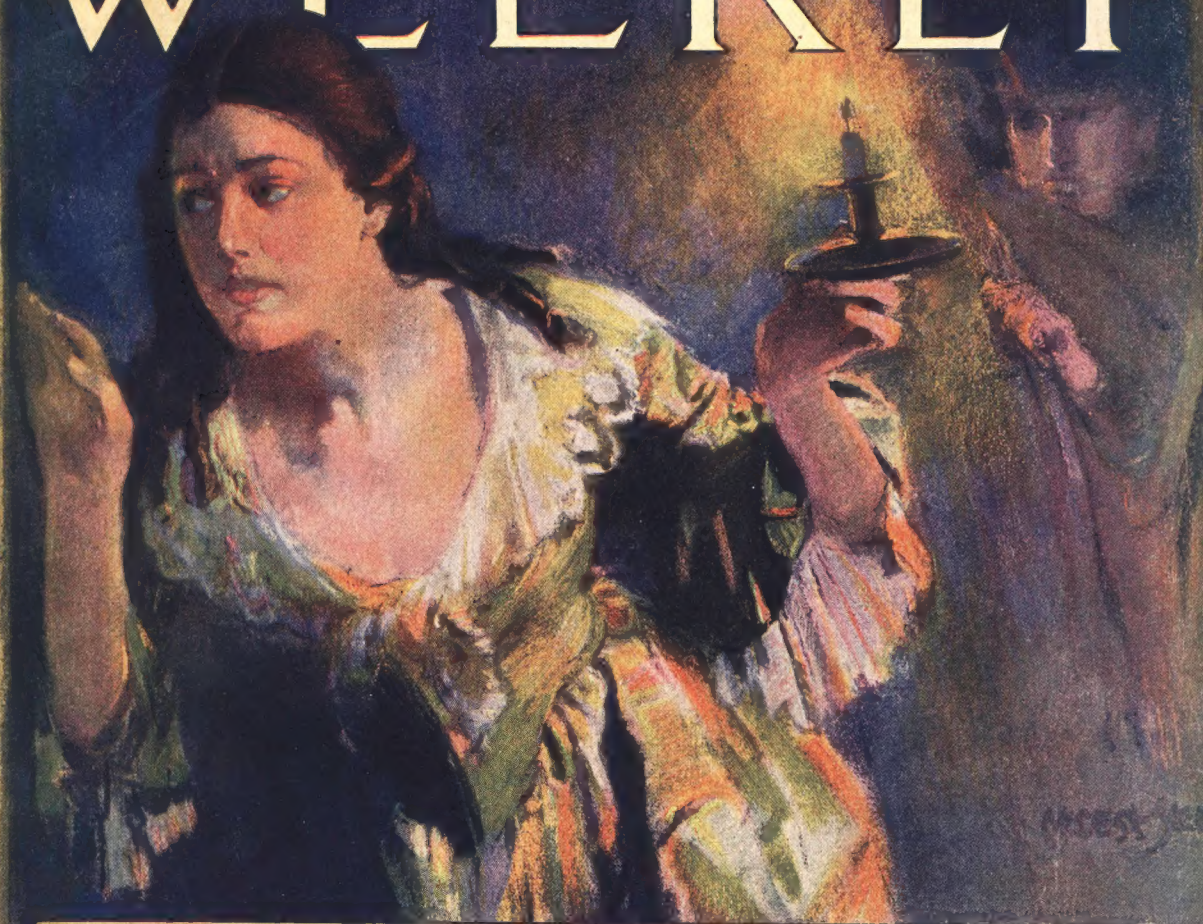


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# ALL-STORY WEEKLY



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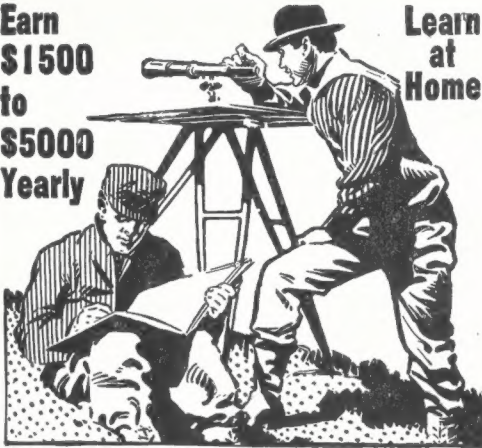
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# The Secret of Being a Convincing Talker

## How I Learned It in One Evening

By George Raymond

"HAVE you heard the news about Frank Jordan?"

This question quickly brought me to the little group which had gathered in the center of the office. Jordan and I had started with the Great Eastern Machinery Co., within a month of each other, four years ago. A year ago, Jordan was taken into the accounting division and I was sent out as salesman. Neither of us was blessed with an unusual amount of brilliancy, but we "got by" in our new jobs well enough to hold them. Imagine my amazement then, when I heard:

"Jordan's just been made Treasurer of the Company!"

I could hardly believe my ears. But there was the "Notice to Employees" on the bulletin board telling about Jordan's good fortune.

Now I knew that Jordan was a capable fellow, quiet, and unassuming, but I never would have picked him for any such sudden rise. I knew, too, that the Treasurer of the Great Eastern had to be a big man, and I wondered how in the world Jordan landed the place.

The first chance I got, I walked into Jordan's new office, and after congratulating him warmly, I asked him to let me "in" on the details of how he jumped ahead so quickly. His story is so intensely interesting that I am going to repeat it as closely as I remember.

"I'll tell you just how it happened, George, because you may pick up a pointer or two that will help you.

"You remember how scared I used to be whenever I had to talk to the chief? You remember how you used to tell me that every time I opened my mouth I put my foot into it, meaning of course that every time I spoke I got into trouble? You remember when Ralph Sinton left to take charge of the Western office and I was asked to present him with the loving cup the boys gave him, how flustered I was and how I couldn't say a word because there were people around? You remember how confused I used to be every time I met new people? I couldn't say what I wanted to say when I wanted to say it; and I determined that if there was any possible chance to learn how to talk I was going to do it.

"The first thing I did was to buy a number of books on public speaking, but they seemed to be meant for those who wanted to become orators, whereas what I wanted to learn was not only how to speak in public but how to speak to individuals under various conditions in business and social life.

"A few weeks later, just as I was about to give up hope of ever learning how to talk interestingly, I read an announcement stating that Dr. Frederick Houk Law of New York University had just completed a new course in business talking and

public speaking entitled 'Mastery of Speech.' The course was offered on approval without money in advance, so since I had nothing whatever to lose by examining the lessons, I sent for them and in a few days they arrived. I glanced through the entire eight lessons, reading the headings and a few paragraphs here and there, and in about an hour the whole secret of effective speaking was opened to me.

"For example, I learned why I had always lacked confidence, why talking had always seemed something to be dreaded whereas it is really the simplest thing in the world to 'get up and talk.' I learned how to secure complete attention to what I was saying and how to make everything I said interesting, forceful and convincing. I learned the art of listening, the value of silence, and the power of brevity. Instead of being funny at the wrong time, I learned how and when to use humor with telling effect.

"But perhaps the most wonderful thing about the lessons were the actual examples of what things to say and when to say them to meet every condition. I found that there was a knack in making oral reports to my superiors. I found that there was a right way and a wrong way to present complaints, to give estimates, and to issue orders.

"I picked up some wonderful pointers about how to give my opinions, about how to answer complaints, about how to ask the bank for a loan, about how to ask for extensions. Another thing that struck me forcibly was that instead of antagonizing people when I didn't agree with them, I learned how to bring them around to my way of thinking in the most pleasant sort of way. Then, of course, along with those lessons there were chapters on speaking before large audiences, how to find material for talking and speaking, how to talk to friends, how to talk to servants, and how to talk to children.

"Why, I got the secret the very first evening and it was only a short time before I was able to apply all of the principles and found that my words were beginning to have an almost magical effect upon everybody to whom I spoke. It seemed that I got things done instantly, where formerly, as you know, what I said 'went in one ear and out the other.' I began to acquire an executive ability that surprised me. I smoothed out difficulties like a true diplomat. In my talks with the chief I spoke clearly, simply, convincingly. Then came my first promotion since I entered the accounting department. I was given the job of answering complaints, and I made good. From that I was given the job of making collections. When Mr. Buckley joined the Officers' Training Camp, I was made Treasurer. Between you and me, George, my salary is now \$7,500 a year and I expect it will be more from the first of the year.

"And I want to tell you sincerely,

that I attribute my success solely to the fact that I learned how to talk to people."

\*\*\*\*\*

When Jordan finished, I asked him for the address of the publishers of Dr. Law's course, and he gave it to me. I sent for it and found it to be exactly as he had stated. After studying the eight simple lessons I began to sell to people who had previously refused to listen to me at all. After four months of record breaking sales during the dull season of the year, I received a wire from the chief asking me to return to the home office. We had quite a long talk in which I explained how I was able to break sales records—and I was appointed Sales Manager at almost twice my former salary. I know that there was nothing in me that had changed except that I had acquired the ability to talk where formerly I simply used "words without reason." I can never thank Jordan enough for telling me about Dr. Law's Course in Business Talking and Public Speaking. Jordan and I are both spending all our spare time making public speeches on war subjects and Jordan is being talked about now as Mayor of our little Town.

So confident is the Independent Corporation, publishers of "Mastery of Speech," Dr. Law's Course in Business Talking and Public Speaking, that once you have an opportunity to see in your own home how you can, in one hour, learn the secret of speaking and how you can apply the principles of effective speech under all conditions, that they are willing to send you the Course on free examination.

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# ALL-STORY WEEKLY

VOLUME XCV

NUMBER 3



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# ALL-STORY WEEKLY

VOL. XCV

NUMBER 3



SATURDAY, MARCH 29, 1919



## The Lion's Jaws

by Victor Rousseau

Author of "The Diamond Demons," "Draft of Eternity," "The Sea Demons," etc.

IN "The Lion's Jaws" Victor Rousseau tells the story of the adventures of a young Virginian who entered Quebec—England's stronghold in Canada—on a secret mission at time of the American invasion of Canada in 1775.

At the conclusion of the military operations that ended in the capture of Boston by Washington in the first year of the American Revolution, General Benedict Arnold volunteered to lead a daring attempt to invade Canada by a march through the Maine wilderness, and try to capture Quebec by a surprise attack. Leaving Cambridge on September 1, he arrived before Quebec with six hundred and fifty men on November 13. Finding that the British had learned of his coming, and that the position was too strong to attack with his small and poorly equipped force, he retired a few miles and awaited reinforcements. General Montgomery, who had invaded Canada from Fort Ticonderoga and captured Montreal, brought them, and their combined forces—about one thousand men—attacked Quebec on the last day of the year. The attack failed; Montgomery was killed, and Arnold severely wounded. More reinforcements arrived early in the spring of 1776, and Arnold was superseded in the command of the expedition. But by that time British troops were arriving daily, and the Americans had to retreat from Canada.

Although Arnold's career ended in deepest infamy, during the early years of the Revolution he proved himself to be a daring, skilful, energetic, and brave soldier; and had he been left in command of the expedition the whole future course of the War for Independence might have been changed.

"The Lion's Jaws" gives a brilliant picture of this daring enterprise; men whose names are well known in American history are among the characters; and, in addition, it is a stirring, quick-moving romance of adventure, love, and war.

### CHAPTER I.

#### MADEMOISELLE.

IT was like heaven to come out of the forest track at last and see the rutted road, cleared for a space of twenty feet each side of it and running like a white ribbon between the bordering birches and evergreens into the distance.

I drew rein, dismounted, strapped up my pedler's pack, and tethered my horse with

a long halter, so that he could graze at will on the lush grass by the roadside. And I stood by him in the warm sunlight, resting my limbs after the long ride among the trees, and my shoulders, stiff from constant bending to avoid the branches, till of a sudden I heard a girl's voice somewhere just across the road, crying for aid. The cry came again almost immediately, and, gathering the long skirts of my coat about me, I crossed in two bounds and ran down



a little trail beyond. I heard the cry a third time, and saw, at the bottom of a little glade, a girl dressed as an Indian, beset by two ruffians, one of whom held her by the arms, while the second unhaltered the plunging horse that she had tied to a sapling.

My moccasined feet made hardly a sound among the soft fern-fronds, and I was almost upon them before they saw me. The fellow fumbling with the horse, who was the nearer, sprang at me with an oath, a hatchet in his hand. The blow fell slantwise across my skull, dazing me for the moment, but inflicting no wound, being turned by the stout felt of my hat. I caught the man's wrist and twisted it, wrenched the hatchet away, and thrust the blade forward into his face with all my strength.

He yelled and reeled back, his mouth and nose instantly ensanguined, pulled his pistol, and snapped at me. It missed fire, and he took to his heels just as his fellow, leaving the girl, came at me. I ducked my head as he presented, and heard his ball strike a tree behind me. Then his arms were about my body, pinioning mine, and his hands crept up toward my throat. He caught it with a sudden shift of his vise-like claws, in a deadly throttle that made the trees swim about me. I managed to tear one of his hands away and hold it; then, with legs locked and heads thrust out like moose in battle, we went stumbling among the saplings, while he tried to draw the pistol from his belt, where he had replaced it, with the purpose of hammering me into unconsciousness.

I had my own, but was in like case; I could not afford to lose what little hold I had of him to pull it forth; nor was it primed, for I had anticipated no danger till I was clear of the forest. So we wrestled to and fro, I now down, and now he. Yet he was a powerfully built ruffian, and I could foresee that, other things being equal, it would not be long before his brute strength overcame me.

I heard the girl crying out beside us as we wrestled, and fought with a desperation that made me for the time his match, but no more.

Then, at the same instant, we saw the fallen hatchet. He snatchèd it; and, as his hold momentarily weakened, I contrived to plunge my hand into my belt, draw my pistol, and bring the butt smashing down on his head before he could deliver his blow. The hatchet fell from his hand; he dropped without a groan, and lay unconscious at my feet, with the sunlight streaming through the painted leaves upon him.

I rose unsteadily, seeing the girl at my side, my senses swimming, yet aware of her wild entreaties and of some warning. Of a sudden I saw the first ruffian, his face a hideous spectacle from the wound I had given him, presenting at me again from behind the trunk of a tree.

The blood in his eyes diverted his aim, but the ball came true enough to set my skirts flopping about my knees. I ran at him; but with a bound he was away through the trees like a panther, running toward the road.

A moment or two afterward I heard a second shot, but no ball came near me. So, hastily priming, I ran down to where my horse stood; it had ceased grazing, and was trembling, but seemed uninjured. Then, satisfied that the fellow had taken to his heels for good, I turned to the girl.

She was hesitating between me and the fallen footpad, and now, seeing me approach, ran back to him, and, falling upon her knees beside the fellow, began to wipe away the blood that oozed from the split in his forehead. But I saw that he breathed easily enough and would be on his feet again within the hour.

"Leave him!" I said. "He is in no danger. How came you here—*mademoiselle*?"

The last word since, as she rose at my bidding, I saw that she was no Indian, but as white as I.

Dark-haired, gray-eyed, she had the carriage and the distinction that only high-breeding gives. And the grace of her, the beauty of her face and form, coupled to this, bewildered me. I had not looked to see such a woman in this cold solitude. As I spoke she looked at me with complete composure.

"I was riding," she said. "I wished to



be alone, and I feared that—some one would have ridden with me. I wished to think, and I had just dismounted when they attacked me. This road has been infested by these robbers since the troubles began. 'Twas foolish of me to come. I thank you, *monsieur*, most deeply. If I can be of service in return—a small return—”

I bowed, forgetting my pedler's disguise; and, if I had recognized her station in hers, she seemed to suspect me in mine, for she looked at me curiously. I was conscious that it sat strangely on me as I went toward her horse, unfastened it, and brought it to her.

“I shall ride with you to your home, *mademoiselle*,” I said, wondering whether habitations existed near by. I spoke at random, for I knew not whether the forest drew to an end within a little distance, or whether there were yet miles to traverse. For days past I had met no one, and had had no map to guide me—only my crude reckoning of the miles.

She made no return to that, and we went down to the road together. I put my hand out for her, and, placing her foot in it, she sprang into her saddle. But when I was already setting my foot in my stirrup, she declined my company.

“On the road 'tis safe, I am sure, *monsieur*,” she said. “And 'tis not far to travel. I thank you again with all my heart, *monsieur*.”

Here her eyes fell upon my pedler's pack, and her tone, which had become that of one equal to another, hardened unconsciously into reserve. Her graciousness, with the little personal touch to it, was simple kindness.

She looked at the pack.

“Perhaps you have some goods of which you would dispose,” she said.

Yet there was a hesitation in her manner, as if she feared to offend or to seem to offer me a reward. I unstrapped my pack and disclosed the trinkets among my silks.

“Poor stuff and hardly meet for yourself, *mademoiselle*,” I said. “Yet, if you would accept a small memento of our meeting—” and I handed her a little rosary of black wooden beads.

She took it from me with some uncertainty, wondering, I think, what sort of chapman I was to save life and then to give my stock away; she was looking at me with a quiet and disconcerting scrutiny when I heard the gallop of a horse down the road, and there came riding into sight a young officer wearing the English uniform. He drew rein with such force as to throw his horse back on its haunches.

As he came galloping up the girl bent toward me swiftly.

“My brother!” she whispered. “Say naught of what has occurred, *monsieur*. 'Twould furnish him with a pretext to—”

Her sentence had not time to shape itself. The young officer leaned toward me as I stood with my foot still in the stirrup and my hands on the saddle.

“Who are you?” he demanded fiercely. “Hermione, you have frightened us all out of our senses! Major Blair is riding along the cliffs to find if, perchance, your horse has flung you, and I have beat the neighborhood this hour and more. But I had not thought that you would ride here, through woods infested with Jerry Duggan's ruffians! Who is this fellow with you?”

“A peaceful merchant, sir,” I answered as meekly as was possible under the youth's attack.

“This gentleman encountered me and saved me from what might have been an accident,” interposed my companion—truly enough.

“And to ride *Cæsar*, when only last week he bolted with me!” cried the brother, still in a towering rage, which seemed to me unjustified by anything I could see. “Come, Hermione. We shall see to it that you ride abroad less freely in the future. Here, Mr. Merchant!”

He plunged his hand into his breeches-pocket, pulled out a fistful of gold guineas, and was about to fling them at me, but changing his mind, handed them to me in a surly manner instead.

I saw his sister look at me imploringly and make a swift sign to me behind his back to take it. But that was more than I could stomach. I was far above taking alms.

“I am a merchant, not a beggar, *mon-*



*sieur*," I answered mildly. "I thank you for your gift, but"—here inspiration came to me—"I would rather sell you my goods."

He laughed, but not easily.

"Aye, bring your wares to our headquarters in Quebec, chapman, and I'll warrant you a good sale among the officers' wives," he answered.

I bit my lip, but remained silent. The girl, looking disconcerted, bade me adieu very kindly; and so, with a parting nod from him, they were off unceremoniously, leaving me sitting horseback in the middle of the trail and looking after them.

This event marked almost the conclusion of that long journey of mine toward Quebec which had begun with the yellowing of the maize along the Kennebec and was closing with the fall of the reddened birch-leaf. My purpose I shall disclose immediately; for its fulfilment I trusted to three things: my mother tongue, French—for my mother was of New Orleans, whence my father brought her as his bride to his plantation upon the James—to my pedler's disguise, and to the luck that had sustained me through ten years of adventure on our Western frontiers.

Rough years; and there was little of the polished Virginian left in me when I came into my father's lands; and even then, fool though the neighbors called me, I needs must tempt fortune once more by taking a lieutenancy in Daniel Morgan's famous company of Virginia riflemen, picked shots with grooved barrels to their fusils, whom he led afoot, without one man falling out of the ranks, to Cambridge, to take part in General Benedict Arnold's expedition against Quebec in this same year 1775. It was already September when we set out on our two hundred miles and more through the wilderness that divides the British province of Quebec from what were still called, even after Breed's Hill and Lexington, the English colonies in North America.

Of our hardships I say naught here, for they have been elsewhere recounted amply. We had surmounted the main part of them, and, not many marches behind me, the van of Morgan's Rifles was pressing un-

detected northward, through the aid of the friendly Abnaki, with the volunteers from New England under Bigelow and Greene, Ritzema's New York regiment, and the men of Connecticut.

Our march was a little more than half completed when Mr. Arnold sent for me.

"I am told you speak the French tongue as a native, Mr. Fortescue," he said, and then invited me to undertake a mission of grave danger.

I rejoiced more at the offer than when I learned its nature. For it was admitted that the success of our expedition depended in the main upon the aid of the conquered French, smarting under their defeat and annexation sixteen years before, when Wolfe had made himself in death the master of Quebec.

Since the proclamation of Congress to the inhabitants of the province had not elicited such results as had been hoped for, it was designed to send an emissary in advance in order to communicate with our supporters in the city.

Of these the most prominent would be, we believed, the Seigneur de Quesnoy, of whom we knew only that his father, who had been killed in the battle of the Plains, had been, with Montcalm, the heart and spirit of the defense. He had left a son, with whose allegiance it was hoped to rally an army to support the cause of liberty.

I had already pledged myself when this was unfolded, and could not withdraw, stipulating, however, that I should bring back no report upon the defenses nor commit any act of espionage. A poor distinction to salve one's honor with! Mr. Arnold assented grudgingly; and so I had departed in the guise of a traveling pedler, carrying a pedler's pack, with a letter to the De Quesnoy Seigneur.

Now, in my long, brown coat, white stockings with tarnished buckles, and cocked hat with bag-wig, all travel-stained as I was, I urged my horse onward, trying to affect the demeanor of a traveler in dry-goods and seraing silks and trinkets.

But my beast was strangely sluggish; I spurred him in vain, for he planted his hoofs in the ground, quivered, and then dropped to his knees.



I sprang from the saddle. I saw a fleck of blood upon his flank. And then I saw the wound made by the ball that had pierced his body.

To the heart, I think, for, with a groan, the poor creature toppled over and lay dead before me. It was the outlaw's second ball, fired, not at me, but at my horse, for revenge.

Well, there was naught to do but leave the beast in the road, shoulder my pack, and proceed on my way. So, being fearful of my disguise, and wishing to meet as few travelers as need be, I struck northward through the forest, guiding my course by the mossy growth on the north side of the trunks.

I knew that I was not far from the St. Lawrence, and some score of miles above Quebec, but had hardly hoped to reach the river that day. However, of a sudden, late in the afternoon, the forest fell away, and I found myself upon the edge of a strip of cleared country, with farms and houses scattered before me, and looking across the majestic river upon the heights opposite.

How my heart leaped at that! I looked up and down the river, and fancied that a distant promontory shielded Quebec; and I stood there gazing until there came the sudden patter of raindrops and a sudden squall broke over me.

Recalled to myself, I made a hasty survey of my surroundings. I could see, some half-mile distant, a substantial building of stone, near a church, and probably the manor.

And, since I must now bear scrutiny, I was debating whether to apply boldly there for shelter, when I heard shouts behind me, and saw a crowd of countrymen running toward me, carrying scythes and flintlocks. A storm of balls hooted about my ears, and, having hardly come such a distance to be massacred by these inhospitable peasants, I dropped my pack and ran. I plunged into an impenetrable undergrowth of wildberry-briers, found a tiny track through the thorns, and reached clear ground behind, hearing the mob hoot and howl behind me. And now a dense river-fog that swept in from the gulf hid me. The shouts behind me died away. I stopped to catch breath,

and, drenched and very wretched, hesitated what to do.

I must cross the river; yet this welcome showed me for the first time the perils of my position. I could not go back, neither would I.

I had eaten my last meal that morning—cakes kneaded of flour and cooked over a fire of sticks. My head ached from the blow I had received. Shelter, warmth, food I must have.

Of a sudden, looking through the thinning fog, I saw the outlines of the manor house quite near me. I had approached the long stone building from the rear; in front of me was an outhouse, evidently a barn, for I could hear faintly the sound of horses crunching their feed.

It was past threshing-time, and there must be wheat and straw in the barn. So, since the fog showed signs of lifting, exposing me to renewed danger, I made my way thither, found it empty, save for a number of horses feeding in their stalls, and went quickly up the ladder into the loft, where I lay down, drawing the fresh, sweet straw over me.

Wet and shivering, I found the warmth so grateful that, after a few moments, I fell fast asleep, and was startled when I opened my eyes again to find that it was almost dark. My hunger troubled me less, but I ached all over and my head still pained me, while, as I rose up, the chill night air set me to shivering.

However, my doubts had cleared away. The entrance into Quebec, which had seemed impossible, now appeared in the light of a reasonable undertaking. I would make my way to the river-shore that night and possess myself of one of the boats there, landing above the city and taking my chance at the gates later, among the farmers.

So with an effort I bent my aching limbs and crept cautiously down the ladder of the loft. I was half-way down when three soldiers came noisily out of the kitchen with two maids, who laughed and chattered in French with them.

I clung where I was, hardly breathing. But they did not look my way and passed on toward the road.



There came my opportunity of a meal from the kitchen. I meant at least to stuff my pockets with bread and to drink from the pannikin which I guessed would stand beside the brimming bucket. So, when the party had passed, I darted across the rain-soaked ground within the kitchen, found the pannikin, and had just drunk when I heard the maids at the door again.

Vile luck—and I was in no mood to dart past them and set the hue and cry on me again. I had two seconds in which to make my decision.

Before me was the inner door, communicating with the master's part of the long structure. I darted through the doorway and crouched outside. The two girls came into the kitchen, accompanied by two men; not the soldiers, however, but farm-hands. They had changed companions deftly; no doubt these had been waiting near by and damning the soldiers.

The four sat down, and I foresaw that I was to remain a prisoner for some time to come.

"And didst thou see the American, then, François?" asked one of the maids.

"See him? *Maudit!* We saw and fired at him, all of us, and the balls rebounded from him like water from the back of a duck. It is true, then, that they are clad in sheet-iron, these Congress men."

And this was my first acquaintance with that singular report which contributed not a little to our first successes—the legend that we wore plate armor. Like most such stories, this had arisen from a very simple error. For the strong coats of homespun linen, or *toile*, worn by many of our frontiersmen, had been called *tole*, or armor plate.

"Art thou sure, François, that he was really one of the Congress men?" asked the maid in a voice of awe.

"Sure of it? Why, I myself was the first to see him, standing looking across the river, and I warned our fellows. Yet he escaped in a hail of bullets, protected by the devil, his master! Holy Family! they will be upon us to-night, perhaps, and massacre us while we sleep!"

"To-morrow I go into Quebec!" exclaimed the maid tearfully. "I should

have gone long ago, only *mademoiselle* told me that, even if they come, there will be naught to fear, since they war only on the English."

The farm-hand made a spluttering sound with his lips.

"Ah, doubtless they would have good cause not to harm *mademoiselle*," he said, "and, if the distinguished company that is here to-night were as sure of it as we are, *mademoiselle* would not retain her liberty long, for we all know what she hides in that chest of hers—"

"Sh!" came from the maids in frightened whispers.

"Aye, but we know, and there are many of us who sigh for the good, pleasant days that are gone," pursued the man. "It is true that M. Bigot, the intendant, took our wheat and left us to starve, but at least we were ruled by our own nation. God speed the Congress men, say I!"

I was fast growing weary of this chatter and of the whispered argument that succeeded it, and was meditating a dash for the door when suddenly a bell began to ring, and I heard one of the maids utter an impatient exclamation and push back her chair.

I should be discovered in another moment, and, my mind not being made up to another pursuit by half the countryside, I took the only course open to me otherwise. I hurried along the passage, on whose stone flags my moccasins made no sound, and, finding a door at the end, pushed it open. I was now in a carpeted hall, lit by a candelabrum standing upon a table far to the front, near the great entrance door, whose light reached only faintly to where I found myself. On either side of this corridor were a number of doors; above me was the stairway leading to the upper story. It was a desperate hazard where to go, for every door was closed, and I could hear the hum of many voices in discussion coming from some undetermined part of the house. But I had no time to hesitate or choose. At this juncture one door was as good as another.

So I turned to the left, turned the handle of the second door gently, and, finding no light in the room, crept inside and



crouched down just as the maid came through the passage doorway. I flattened myself against the wall, to leave her room to pass me if she should enter. But she went by, and entered the room adjoining, and I heard the clink of glasses from the tray that she carried.

And now I became aware that the room next to that in which I crouched was brilliantly illuminated with candles. I could see the light through the chinks of what I made out to be a pair of folding doors, and I heard the voices of men raised in loud argument. I crept nearer the doors, unconscious of any intent to play the spy, but anxious to know into what manner of company I had so nearly stumbled.

So I took my station there, heard the maid pass again, and, breathing more easily that I had thus far escaped detection, discovered that I could see between the edges of the folding doors into a large *salon*.

## CHAPTER II.

### A COUNCIL OF WAR.

IT was well furnished, with great, roomy chairs and a long table. There was a Turkey carpet; before the window stood a large *secrétaire*; a fire of logs blazed in the chimney. Candelabra on the table and hanging lamps lit up the faces of the five men who had gathered there. They were all army officers.

Three were, at a glance, Englishmen, one being considerably older than the others; one was a Frenchman with a thin, sallow face and the look of a veteran campaigner; and one was the young Frenchman whom I had encountered in the forest that afternoon.

All five were leaning back in the comfortable chairs, stretching out their spurred boots to the fire and sipping their wine.

"The question to be solved," said the eldest, "is what attitude the French will adopt toward us. All other matters are subsidiary to that. Sir Guy has called out the militia, in every parish the list of *censitaires* has been read at the church doors, and it might be a new hair-powder tax for all the notice that is taken of it.

"And what say they? Why, that they had enough of the *lettres de petit cachet* under the old régime, and that they'll not lift finger for or against us. And all the stoutest of our troops have been hastened to Montreal, to hold that town against the men who stormed St. Johns and Chambly. No, Major Blair"—addressing one of the younger officers—"I grudge them not the tribute due them, for they are men of our blood, rebels though they be. All our hopes must center in Sir Guy Carleton's return, for, if General Arnold and his backwoodsmen are able to traverse the forests, who else can save the capital, honey-combed as it is with nests of spies and traitors?"

"Pray what is our provost marshal doing, that he does not run these foxes to earth?" queried the French officer suavely. "I understood, Major Caldwell, that you and Colonel Voyer had registered every inhabitant of Quebec?"

"We have. But—the devil, sir, how can we keep the reins on those rascals who swarm in the streets of St. Rochs? Why, every wedding farmer who brings his vegetables and wheat to market may carry away the plans of our defenses under his hat!

"And those French thieves—pardon me, M. le Comte Dupre, for I speak only on the late intendant, M. Bigot—left the walls in such condition, with their rotten contracts and scamped workmanship, that they are like to fall at the first cannonade. The masonry crumbling, the moat half full of rubbish and broken stone—it breaks one's heart to look at it. Our situation is serious, and if Mr. Arnold really have determination, as they say of him—"

"To the devil with him and his pack of rogues!" shouted one of the younger Englishmen, springing to his feet and flinging out his arms with energy. "What, shall Quebec surrender to a chemist's clerk, or to that Irish renegade Montgomery? Let their men but show their faces on these heights, and I warrant a few rounds of grape and case will send them packing homeward!"

The energy of his words and manner caused me to observe him closely. He was



a handsome, well-built man of between thirty and thirty-five, with a keen, drawn, resolute face and lips set tightly; reckless and buoyant; certainly every inch a soldier in his red coat and Ramillie wig.

"Well spoken, Major Blair!" cried the young officer beside him, who had not yet given utterance. "If yours were the spirit of all, we should have little cause to fear."

"We do not fear," interposed Major Caldwell gravely. "We face the facts, gentlemen, and no more. It is the approach of winter, and the long months that must pass before aid can reach us, with the breaking up of the ice; Admiral Graves's refusal to set sail from Boston until spring; the loss of Crown Point and Ticonderoga, of Chambly and St. Johns, the key of Canada, the threat to Montreal—"

"Aye, Major Caldwell, but have we not still the stoutest soldiery in all the world to-day?" cried Blair; and, at his ringing tones, I noticed how the rest seemed to quicken.

"Do not forget the English Fusileers, the Royal Emigrants, Wolfe's Highlanders, whose valor has not weakened after sixteen years of settlement along these shores; then the militia. At least, I answer for the English part of them. You can speak, no doubt, for the French, M. le Comte?" he turning toward the French officer.

"My dear major, permit me to refer you to a certain historical triviality of the spring of 1760," drawled the Comte Dupre.

Major Blair winced, for the victory of the Duc de Levis over the English at Ste. Foye, in the spring following Wolfe's victory, was not a pleasant memory, and only the timely arrival of an English fleet had saved the city.

But he took his glass in his hand and raised it.

"What say you, gentlemen," he cried, "shall Mr. Arnold and his levies possess themselves of our stronghold and intern us all in their wilderness, to rot among the rebels there, or shall we drink confusion—thrice confusion to him?"

"By God, sir, you would put courage into the heart of the meanest weakling!" cried Major Caldwell. "We came here with gloom in our hearts, suffering from

fears we would hardly express to one another, and we shall go on our way with a fresh faith. Your toast, sir—confusion to the invader! Naught but treachery shall pull us down. I'll drink with you!"

They sprang from their chairs and stood with glasses held high. I had heard enough, and was resolved to make my exit without further delay. I was already moving toward the door when the sudden glimmer of a taper upon the stairs sent me back to my hiding-placé.

Then I heard the soft rustle of a woman's garments, and the edge of a heel that scraped the wood beyond the edge of the carpet. Crouching down, I saw the girl who carried the light.

It was she whom I had saved that afternoon.

Closing my eyes again, I see her as she came down the stairs that evening, moving with the slim taper held aloft, like a Psyche come to life, while the flickering spire of light drove the fleeing rout of shadows before her.

I watched her in admiration that made me momentarily forget my peril. She was going into the room in which the guests had assembled, of course, and then I could determine whether the kitchen or the front door lay open to me.

There was the width of the passage between us, but I drew nearer to the wall, and knew that, with the light of the taper in her eyes, she would not see me. But, instead of passing along the hall and entering the large *salon* adjoining, she turned and came slowly into the room in which I was concealed, and stood not five paces away from me, holding the taper on high and looking about her.

At once the contents of the room were imprinted on my brain. It was a little smaller than I had thought, perhaps less than half as large as the *salon*, and evidently her own. There was a little window, but the light was so obscured, probably by trees without, that hitherto I had not perceived it. Midway between the window and the door stood a spindle-legged writing-table, of the new fashionable style, with inkstand and sand-well, and quills and writing-paper laid neatly upon it.



There were chairs, a music-cabinet inlaid with ormolu, and in the corner opposite the door stood a harpsichord with a potted fern on it, and a dish of marchpanes. In another corner was a spinning-wheel, with strands of flax near by, and on a stand a small distaff, and a glass in a frame, half painted with a coat of arms. Between the harpsichord and the wheel I saw a partly open door, before which hung curtains, leading into a still smaller room within.

The girl passed slowly into the room, went by me, and stood with her fingers pressed against one of the leaves of the folding doors. Even then my chance came back. If I could not have escaped unseen, I might at least have broken from the house before she had recovered from her fright. But I remained where I was, watching her in front of me, and all unconscious of me, her profile like a cameo beneath the taper.

Then I heard Major Caldwell speaking in grave tones in the adjoining room.

"We trust you, Captain St. Cyr," he was saying. "But you must prove our judgment. Treason must not overcome us where force of arms shall fail, and, if those papers exist, as we believe, they must be placed in our hands.

"We trust you, in proof whereof we have dealt well with you. Where other seignories have changed hands through the fortune of war, this has remained secure to *mademoiselle*."

I heard the young French officer answer in a constrained voice.

"I shall prove my loyalty, Major Caldwell," he said, "and you can rely on me to the utmost. I have done all that is possible in this matter, and have informed you."

"Aye, sir. But these times admit of no half measures. Those papers, if they exist, are essential to our security. They must be placed in the governor's hands, or I cannot guarantee your sister's liberty or these estates."

"Major, I have told you constantly that I know naught of these papers," answered the young officer petulantly. "I can but repeat what I have said already. I have used suasion, threats, and expostulations, and ill in vain.

"She affirms naught; she denies naught. I have searched her room, the manor, and the grounds. -I have found naught. She was a child of four years when her father died. How should she have such papers and have hidden them through childhood?"

"But she denies naught!"

"She is as stubborn as the devil. 'Tis to plague us all, more than likely, and to gratify that errant whim of hers against the English."

"We are not here now to debate that question, Captain St. Cyr," said Caldwell sternly. "The rumors that couple your sister's name with the activities of the disaffected may be untrue; if they are true, any day may bring about such a situation that we shall find ourselves undone. We can afford to take no chances. We must have those papers or have convincing proof that they do not exist.

"She is little more than a child. You, as her guardian, realizing your responsibility, must act for us in this matter, and without delay. That is all, sir!"

I heard the young officer protesting, Major Blair's intervention, and the two talking together in low tones that did not reach my ears.

Through this I saw the profile of the girl at the folding doors as motionless as a statue. And then, incongruously enough, the spell that held her was lifted. A warbler in a cage suspended in the room, which I had failed to notice, began to sing. The girl was still standing, as if in irresolution, with her hand on the leaf of the folding door, her long, slim fingers a little apart, the rounded arm that held the taper aloft disclosed under the loose sleeve. At the first chirp she turned, and, in turning, saw me.

I was struck by her singular self-possession. Though she recognized me immediately, she neither started nor stirred, and her face, which had seemed expressive of every passing thought, and keenly conscious of the dialogue in the next room, became a mask.

I was astounded at the self-repression, the swift and startling change it made in her. And, resolving each successive instant to make a dash for liberty, I only



straightened myself against the wall and looked back at her, more like a drenched clown than a Virginian.

Her lips parted.

"What do you here?" she asked in a low tone, and she approached me softly, giving me the impression that she did not wish the men in the next room to know of my presence.

A shout of laughter from Major Blair, at which I noticed that her lips tightened, gave me an opportunity to answer.

"*Mademoiselle*," I said, "I am a merchant from Three Rivers," and felt my face grow hot at the lie which my mission had made inevitable. "I was riding toward Quebec to negotiate my wares this afternoon, when—"

"When you saved me," she interposed. "But what do you here in my room, *mon-sieur*?"

"My name is Allan Fortescue," I answered. "I came here, *mademoiselle*, because my horse was shot by the ruffians who assaulted you, and, being mistaken by your peasantry, I was set upon and fired at. I sought shelter—"

A look of quick sympathy came over her face.

"Doubtless the stupid maids failed to hear your ring," she said. "We are all alarmed over the threats of invasion, and there were stories of a spy this afternoon, who was supposed to be hiding in the forest. We shall show you, M. Fortescue, that we know how to repay such kindness as yours."

"The greatest kindness, *mademoiselle*," I answered, "will be to permit me to thank you for my temporary refuge here and to take my departure."

"But why?" she asked, looking at me in wonder.

Now, in my rain-soaked and hay-stained merchant's outfit, with my cocked hat drooping over my ear, and my old-fashioned bag-wig awry, I must have resembled some huckster in his Sunday finery.

But the girl's glance, traveling up and down me, rested upon my moccasins. I knew that these betrayed me as no merchant. I had had a pair of stout traveling

boots in my bag, meaning to assume them when nearing settled country, but the pack lay somewhere in the briers where I had dropped it.

And suddenly I yielded to the impulse that came upon me to speak the truth. Heaven knows, my hope of enlisting the girl's sympathy was not great, despite what I had overheard; yet I felt that this chance was better than falling into the hands of the noisy company in the room beyond.

"I am an American," I said, "and on a mission from General Arnold to Quebec. If I am found and known for what I am, my life pays for it, for I am a lieutenant in General Arnold's army."

She stood perfectly still, one hand raised to her breast, and looking at me as if she would search to the bottom of my heart. Then she inclined her head slowly and seemed about to answer me.

But at that moment I heard swift footsteps in the adjacent room, and suddenly the folding doors were thrown back, and Major Blair stood in the opening.

### CHAPTER III.

#### "AN OFFICER OF THE CROWN."

WITH the quickest of gestures the girl motioned toward the curtains that hung before the little room at the rear. Instinctively I darted toward them and passed into the room beyond. It was almost pitch-dark, and I could see nothing. I halted behind the curtains; and then the intruder was within the room.

"*Mademoiselle*, a thousand pardons!" he cried as he swung back the door within a few inches of her face. "You go as soft as any mouse; I did not dream you had come in, and sought merely to assure myself that no lurking servant overheard our converse. Nevertheless, my curiosity has gained me a new and inestimable privilege."

"What is that, Major Blair?" asked the girl, to gain time, as I could perceive, and interposing herself between him and the curtains.

"Need you ask, *mademoiselle*?" he answered, approaching and trying to take her hand, which she drew back behind her.



He laughed, but seemed nettled by the action.

"To press upon you again what I urged so vainly yesterday," he said. "Ah, *mademoiselle*, you know not your true friends.

"Think you it was those papers that brought me here again? If you would but listen more kindly—"

"Truth is the surest kindness; major," she answered. "Shall I be held to answer charges brought by every babbling tongue? Those papers of which you speak—"

"A fig for the papers," he answered petulantly. "I am not here to speak of them, but of what is a thousand times more pressing.

"*Mademoiselle*, love, with a soldier, is but a kindlier war; he cannot veil his feelings as he hides his body behind a parapet. If I am too blunt, let that be my excuse and the occasion for your forgiveness."

"Major Blair, your suit is already answered," said the girl. "If you mean to pursue it further, this is no time, nor yet the occasion. Leave go my hand!"

He had seized it in his, and now let it fall reluctantly.

"Well, let me read your face, and see if that be irrevocable," he answered, taking the taper, which she still held, and raising it to set it in the socket beside the door.

As the light changed I perceived that I was hiding in a bedroom. Shame overwhelmed me that I should have placed myself in such a position. I could not take that advantage for my safety.

And I was red-hot with rage, not so much at the commonplace of the rejected suit, as at the sight of the officer in his scarlet, the type of all I had been trained to hate, eager and arrogant, and at my merchant's habit and the falseness of my situation.

At the girl's half-cry I stepped out from behind the curtains. At the sound of their movement Major Blair turned and faced me.

I saw suspicion and alarm leap into his face. He held the taper aloft for an instant, to throw its light on mine.

Then, lowering it with a vicious sweep that flung a sputter of grease upon the floor, he uttered an oath and clapped his hand to his sword-hilt.

"Who is this fellow, *mademoiselle*?" he cried furiously, glaring at me, from my stained and ruffled shirt-frills to my muddy stockings.

He looked backward at the girl's face for an instant, and his suspicion became madness. He whipped the sword out of his scabbard and ran at me.

He would have pierced me ere I could avoid his onslaught, had she not caught his arm and clung to him.

"What madness is this?" she cried. "Put back your sword, major!"

He tried to shake her from him, but her hands were on the sword-hilt, and her fingers tightened about it. At his outcry the rest came running in. In a trice they had intervened between us, but Blair held his sword pointed at my throat.

"Who are you? Answer, and quickly!" he shouted to me.

The younger Englishman burst into loud laughter, yet less in mockery of me, I thought, than to disarm Blair's fury.

"Think you this fellow is one of Arnold's spies?" he cried. "If this be a sample of Mr. Arnold's men, my dear major, Quebec has no need to tremble yet!"

I saw that Hermione was trembling, but she laid her hand quietly upon Blair's arm.

"Major," she said, "had you been less impetuous in your entrance, I should have explained the matter to you. This gentleman"—she emphasized the word—"is Mr. Allan Fortescue, a merchant from Three Rivers, journeying to Quebec, who has sought shelter here after being set upon by some of the peasants. This afternoon he saved me—"

Here Captain St. Cyr, recognizing me, uttered a little exclamation, and thrust himself forward, looking at me with no very welcoming intent.

"When I had been attacked by foot-pads in the forest," the girl continued.

"You told me naught of this!" cried her brother furiously.

"You were in no mood to hear it, my dear Armand," replied Hermione. "Nevertheless, but for his aid, I should have lost horse and purse at least."

"An Englishman!" cried the younger of the officers, looking at me doubtfully.



"Ah, my dear Captain Frazer, we have still to hear his own explanation," said Major Blair scornfully, still keeping the sword-point aimed at me. And I could see that Hermione's intervention had only increased his rage.

"You have heard mine," she said, and tried to take the sword from him. But he would not lower the point, although I saw that he held it thus more to insult and threaten me than from any thought of using it.

But when Captain Frazer whispered something in his ear he allowed the point to fall, and returned the blade sullenly into its sheath.

I felt my own anger boil at his contempt.

"*Mademoiselle* has stated the truth," I said. "My flight from your peasantry in the rain—for I am a peaceful man—accounts for my sorry aspect.

"I ran into that room because I was afraid, being timid by nature. As for my name, my mother was French, my father English. A passable combination, I believe, gentlemen?"

I glanced at the Comte Dupre as I spoke, and saw him smile sourly at this sally. And I fancied that they were impressed, for who but a coward claims to be one?

"Yes, but if I may be pardoned—" began Captain Frazer quietly.

Now all this while Major Blair had been holding the taper in his left hand. At this instant it suddenly went out—yet, though the flicker was as if a draft had extinguished it, I could have sworn that Hermione, making a light movement behind Blair, had blown it out in passing.

I was not sure, but, in the momentary confusion, I felt a finger on my lips, and a hand at my belt. My own hand closed on it; it was a woman's; and, while I stood, still confused, I heard the click of a tinder-box, and the taper was alight once more, and in its socket, and somebody had folded back the doors, flooding the room with light.

"Mr. Fortescue will pardon me," said Captain Frazer; "but he spoke of being a merchant, yet wears moccasins, and carries a pistol. Permit me, *monsieur!*"

I opened the flap of the pistol-pocket.

To my amazement it was empty. The stupefaction on Frazer's face matched mine.

"I could have sworn I saw a pistol butt!" he cried.

"Perhaps, sir, you would search me?" I retorted.

He flushed and drew back. Major Caldwell came forward with an air of authority.

"Gentlemen, let there be none of these exchanges, pray," he said. "You will understand readily, Mr. Fortescue, that every stranger is scanned closely in days like these. And you will no doubt infer that we four servants of his majesty have not foregathered here to-night for social purposes.

"Our interest in you, our doubts, are not personal ones. The point at issue is—pardon me if I speak bluntly—how may we know that you have but now entered this house, and did not overhear our converse from this room. Who admitted you, and how long since?"

"It was I admitted Mr. Fortescue, not twenty minutes since," said Hermione.

To my unutterable relief, but my increased bewilderment. I tried to keep my face composed, but my heart beat wildly.

Was she, then, willing to go to such lengths to aid me? Could we count on her assistance, if she had the power, and not Captain St. Cyr?

I looked from one face to another, to see the effect of her words: at Major Caldwell's, inflexible and severe, the sallow, cynical countenance of the Comte Dupre, Frazer's blunt and ingenuous one, and Major Blair's a little reddened with wine, and full of insolent and disparaging appraisal of me.

The Comte Dupre was whispering into Caldwell's ear. Caldwell listened, nodded, and drew aside with him; Captain Frazer was humming a little tune; Major Blair stood sulkily apart, his eyes now cast down, his legs outspread, his fingers drumming on his sword-hilt.

I thought his face the handsomest that I had ever seen. Courage was there, with that blend of high recklessness which, when mingled with self-control, makes the great soldier. In this last quality, however, he was clearly lacking.



Then Major Caldwell spoke.

"That being the case, *mademoiselle*," he said, "there remains nothing for me to do but to tender Mr. Fortescue my apologies, in the name of us all."

I thanked him, and asked if I might consider myself free, waiting in a suspense I strove with all my might to hide.

"As to that, sir," he answered, "there exists no reason why you should not proceed on your way toward Quebec under escort, there to register and to remain in your lodgings a few hours, pending the lieutenant-governor's permit. This is the customary way of dealing with strangers at present.

"Unfortunately, however, neither I nor any of these gentlemen is returning to Quebec at present, nor can we spare a soldier for an escort. And that is unfortunate, sir, for, since you are not a soldier, I cannot place you on your parole."

"My word of honor—" I began hotly, for my merchant's disguise was growing insufferable.

"I could accept willingly, but not as his majesty's representative. Therefore it occurs to me that, if Captain St. Cyr would be willing to offer you his hospitality till we return, and would vouch for you, in return for the service you offered *mademoiselle*, his sister, this afternoon, which was a great feat for a timid man—"

Captain St. Cyr started violently; I could see the charge was both distasteful and wholly unexpected; he had the aspect of a man who has fallen into a trap.

But Major Caldwell's irony seemed to sting Blair to madness.

"I have a more suitable proposal to make, major," he cried, turning upon me in the utmost disdain, and hissing out his words almost in my face. "Since it is *mademoiselle* herself who has vouched for this gentleman merchant, in whom she interests herself, and since she, being the *seigneur*, is an officer of the crown, perhaps 'twould be more fitting that she herself accept the charge of him.

"Moreover, inasmuch as she must visit Quebec shortly, I understand, in order to make her homage to Mr. Cramahe, the lieutenant-governor, in Sir Guy's absence,

she could convey him to the provost marshal without awaiting our return."

I could see that he was almost insane with jealous anger. He shifted his eyes, which had blazed upon my face, to meet Hermione's.

At his insult she had first started, as a well-bred horse might leap from the whip, and clenched her hands; but, as he turned toward her, she masked her feelings in the same singular way that I had noted before, and showed only the least elevation of her brows, as if surprised at his discourtesy. And yet it seemed to me as if an unspoken challenge and acceptance had passed between them.

She inclined her head.

"I accept the charge, as an officer of the crown," she answered, in a tone of light irony, and the spirit of her reply seemed to flick Blair, in turn, to the raw, for he swung away, scowling at me.

"Then that will set us free of our dilemma," said Caldwell, with an ungracious smile. "I then appoint you my acting deputy, *mademoiselle*, till such time as you shall have delivered Mr. Fortescue to the provost marshal at the Château St. Louis. That is satisfactory to you, Captain St. Cyr?"

The young Frenchman came forward, smiling in a rather forced manner.

"By all means," he answered. "In fact, I owe my apologies to Mr. Fortescue for having seemed ungrateful. I am deeply conscious, sir," he continued, "of your assistance this afternoon.

"You have supped? Then you must take a glass of wine with me, and supper. Hermione, see that the guest-room is got ready."

At this juncture there came a loud knocking at the door of the house, which, opened, admitted a gentleman in the dress of a merchant captain.

He was a man of about five and forty years, red of face, red of hair, hearty and loud of manner.

"Well, Captain Barnsfare, you would drag us from our snug quarters here?" asked Major Caldwell.

"By Heavens, unless you would delay till morning!" he answered. "The tide has



turned, and the sooner you are all on board the better."

"Your orders shall be obeyed, captain, and immediately," said Caldwell. "M. le Comte, if you are ready—Captain Frazer, if you will apprise the sergeant—"

They withdrew noisily, and Captain St. Cyr came up to me.

"You must forgive me, Mr. Fortescue," he said. "In truth I have been somewhat troubled. Nothing will delight me more than to house you here until I can accompany you and my sister into Quebec."

Yet the civility of his words failed to hide either his uneasiness or a veiled hostility. I wondered what motive possessed his mind.

And my own uneasiness was not allayed, for I believed that I was still under suspicion, though I could not fathom the motives that had inspired Caldwell.

St. Cyr drew me into the salon. As I passed the door I saw Major Caldwell and the *comte* standing in the hall together; I saluted them, and they had returned my salutation before I realized that I had given mine in military style.

The reflection shocked me; there were a score of points to be remembered, if I was not to find my head within the hangman's noose.

A troublesome situation! And, as these thoughts crowded themselves upon my mind, in the space of a few seconds, there happened something that altogether restored my spirits, and made me believe my mission would be no vain one.

For some one closed the folding doors behind St. Cyr and me, and, as the crack narrowed to the width of a hand, a slender hand came through, and in it was my pistol.

I took the weapon and thrust it into my shirt-front. It was the act of a moment; but, before the hand was withdrawn, I had pressed my lips quickly to it in gratitude.

Then, through the open door of the salon, I saw Blair watching me. He had not seen my action, but his eyes, meeting mine, were full of unspoken menace.

And then St. Cyr was speaking, with suave falseness in his tones:

"My dear M. Fortescue, a glass of wine with you!"

## CHAPTER IV.

### HERMIONE'S LEGACY.

I HAD flung myself down upon my bed in my room in the upper story, meaning to rest a little before undressing, and had fallen asleep almost instantly.

Yet I was too tired for sleep; it was a coma, through which I was extraordinarily aware of all the sounds in the manor, of the night noises, of the horsemen who galloped up to the door, and of St. Cyr unbolting it.

I even heard the whispering converse, through some acuteness of the senses—not the words, of course, but the tone of warning, almost of conspiracy. Yet through all this I was hardly conscious of being awake; not until sounds in the small room underneath aroused me effectively.

I sat up, straightening my stiffened limbs, and could not but overhear. For the second time I played the listener, but this time, after the few first words had reached my ears, willingly.

"Why did you bring him here?" asked Hermione, in low tones so clearly enunciated, and so incisive with anger that she might have been speaking in the next room, so clear they were.

"It was Caldwell's suggestion," answered St. Cyr evasively.

"Yet you knew of this mission then."

"I knew naught, Hermione. The summons came an hour ago, when I was asleep. It cannot be denied; I am needed at headquarters, and must be in Quebec by morning."

"And leave me alone with him?"

"A very worthy merchant!" sneered St. Cyr, as if he mistrusted me and saw through my disguise.

There was a pause. Then:

"I could believe you, Armand, had you never lied to me before," she answered. "I do not believe in this mission of yours."

"Are you of so much consequence that Mr. Cramahe should send here for you, at dead of night, to confer on matters of state? Confess you lied to me."



"Lie or no lie, I go!" he cried fiercely. "Stay here with your fine merchant adventurer! Take him to Colonel Voyer, the provost marshal, in your charge, as an officer of the crown, since you have championed him!"

"Armand, you are a cur!" she answered hotly. "Would you place your sister in such a position, to have her the gossip of Quebec?"

"No sister of mine! You are mad, Hermione! Thought you to inveigle me in your schemes, when even now our hold upon the seigniori is shaken?"

"When Sir Guy returns he will demand those papers which you have hidden from me, from all of us, to gratify your foolish spite against the English. In God's name give them up, before we are turned out of our home!"

"I have never acknowledged that I have any papers."

"You have them, and I will have them!"

"You have tried, Armand. You have searched my room many times in my absence."

"You have set spies upon me. You have brought false friends here, to use them through my confidence. Have you found aught?"

I heard St. Cyr curse under his breath. For all his violence, it was strange how she seemed the dominating spirit.

"Think you such methods will move me?" she continued. "Think you I know not why you brought him here? 'Twas as a bait for Major Blair, hoping that it would goad him into"—she hesitated, and continued in a lower tone—"into marrying me."

I heard St. Cyr utter an angry exclamation.

"And that is the consummation of your desires, Armand, because you have lost thousands to him at cards," she said. "You would sell me, your sister, as you would sell France."

"God's truth!" he burst out. "The woman is mad! There is no France to-day."

"Canada is not France, and if you were sensible you would abandon these notions and take your proper station in the province, at the court of the governor-general."

For a whim, for a crazed girl's whim, you would ruin us all!"

He raged up and down the room, and then flung himself out. I heard the front door slam, and presently the sound of a horse being ridden hard away from the manor.

I lay on my bed in shame and humiliation at the position in which I found myself; yet there was no escape from it, since Hermione must either bring me to Quebec or be dishonored. And so I dozed off to sleep again, dreaming of her and of St. Cyr, and Blair.

I dreamed Blair had me by the throat and was choking the life out of me; I tried to catch my breath, but could not, and suddenly I struggled out of sleep to discover that a pillow was being pressed down hard on my face.

Some inner monition prompted me to lie still, drawing what breath I could for a second or two, till my assailant thought, evidently, I was unconscious; then, with a bound, I had shaken myself free, and was engaged in a struggle for life with a masked ruffian at my bedside.

He had me by the throat, but I wrenched myself free and slid to the floor. There we wrestled, and underneath I heard the running to and fro of a number of men, and then Hermione cry out—then a pistol shot, then silence, and then the moving in the room beneath me.

With that I made a desperate and successful effort to free myself from my assailant. I could not see his face even in the darkness, for my window was masked by the great tree before it; but I felt my blows pounding his flesh, till suddenly he released me and I staggered to my feet.

With that there came a spurt of flame, the sound of a report, and his ball ruffled my hair and bounded from the wall behind me. I found him again, wrenched the pistol from him, and hammered him about the head. He ran from me, found the window, as if he knew it, clambered upon the sill, and swung into the tree without.

There a finger of moonlight touched his face, and, for all the black mask that bound his eyes, I recognized, to my disgust and amazement, Armand St. Cyr!



But I did not wait to ponder upon this mystery. In a moment I was clearing the stairs.

The cry came again from below, and, as I reached the hall, I saw, very faintly, Hermione, at the door of her room, struggling with three masked men, two of whom had her about the waist and seemed trying to carry her away.

At the same time I was conscious of horses standing without, and of the keen air that blew through the open door. And in the kitchen the maids were screaming that the Americans had come, and that they would all be massacred, and worse.

As I ran toward Hermione two of the ruffians released her and came at me, the foremost, a burly fellow, drawing a pistol as he ran.

I snapped mine, but uselessly, for it had already been discharged. I hurled it into his face, spoiling his aim, so that his ball went wild.

We closed; but in that moment I recognized him, too, despite his mask, for a bleeding scar traversed part of his cheek, and he was the footpad to whom I had given it that afternoon.

My blow staggered him, and he gave way to his companion, who trusted not to pistol, but swung a heavy bludgeon at me, striking me on the left shoulder and numbing my arm for a few seconds. And, as I fought him back with my fists, the third caught up the girl, despite her furious struggles, and carried her along the passage toward the entrance.

The two were between us; but the man with the club was somewhat hampered by the narrowness of the hall.

It was no time for nice fighting. I dealt him a kick in the stomach that sent him writhing to the floor, seized his club, and brought it down with all my might upon his companion's head.

The ruffian ran screaming in the wake of the abductor, and I caught him at the door and hurled him down the steps into the tangled shrubbery that grew about the entrance.

As I emerged I saw a man galloping down the road. I knew it was St. Cyr; either he realized his plot had miscarried,

or was not minded to confront his sister as a captive.

The ruffian who held her set her down and looked back uncertainly. Seeing me disengaged, he came at me, waving a sword.

I leaped backward. But at that moment the one that I had put out of action came sliding from within past me, slamming the door as he came, and leaving me trapped without.

I struck the sword up with the club; the fellow roared and swung it round his head like a poleax, making for me. One of his mates grabbed me from behind.

I was flung prostrate in the mud. And then I heard a report over me, and saw Hermione standing at the kitchen door, a smoking fowling-piece in her hands.

The ruffian dropped the sword, clapped his hands to his thigh and yelled; and in quicker time than I can relate, the three were on horseback and galloping wildly down the road, riding like the butchers they were, with toes outpointing and heels sagging in their stirrups, and elbows out, jerking and sawing at their bridions.

Hermione was at my side, the smoking gun in her hands.

"You are hurt?" she cried. "You are wounded?"

"Thanks to you—no, *mademoiselle*!" I answered, rising to my feet a little foolishly. I tried to take the piece from her, but she drew me into the kitchen, where the maids were standing on the table and screaming at the top of their voices.

"Ninette! Marie! For shame!" cried the girl. "Can you do naught better than that?"

"The Americans, *mademoiselle*!" they both cried, relaxing into tears.

"You see, M. Fortescue," said Hermione scornfully, "our men, such as have not gone to the woods to avoid the enrolment, agree that valor has no place here against your men."

I saw the maid Marie dart a quick look at me.

"Go to your beds," said the girl to the maids. "If you are to be massacred, be massacred there, which is more becoming than in my kitchen."

With loud cries the pair made for their



quarters, and a great slamming of doors and pushing home of bolts came to our ears. I followed Hermione into the salon, where a flare was burning. She had taken a bag of powder and a handful of slugs from the kitchen, and I took the gun from her hands and reloaded it.

"You must go to bed," I said. "If they return their reception shall be a warm one."

"Oh, they have had enough," she retorted. "Some of the outlaws of these parts, M. Fortescue, think the times propitious to attack isolated houses. They will not face arms, or men who expect them."

"*Mademoiselle*," I said with hesitation, "I thought, when I accepted your brother's invitation to-night, that I was to be his guest. I know not what to say, except that, had I known he was to be gone, I should have declined it."

She broke into tears, with a suddenness that showed the relaxation of her nervous tension. She put her hand on mine imploringly.

"I will trust you, M. Fortescue," she said. "Heaven knows I can trust none other."

"Think you those ruffians were inspired with the hopes of pilfering our poor treasures? They fly at higher game. You heard them speak of papers, which, it is supposed, I hold?"

"That is true; 'tis to seek them and sell them to the English those outlaws broke into this house. And I fear"—she wept again—"that Armand was privy to the plot, and rode away that he might not defend me."

To which, of course, I answered nothing.

"He is my half-brother," she went on. "My mother was a widow, with a little boy, when my father married her. He died when I was four years old. My memory of him—but of that I shall speak at some other time."

"Armand has always been embittered toward me because the seigniorship did not fall to him, though my father made no difference between us. He left him a competence, which he gambled away among the officers in Quebec, and among tricksters who cheated him."

She could not go on; I knew what she meant, but I could only wait patiently till she was able to continue.

She turned to me impulsively.

"*Monsieur*," she said, "it has been our intention to return to Quebec, to our town house there, for the winter, in a few days. And we were hastening our plans, because of the troubles, and the fear that the Americans may really appear some day out of the forests."

"Now I am afraid for your sake. Let us start for Quebec to-morrow morning, then, and on the way you shall escape me and return—"

"But the provost marshal?" I asked, a little whimsically.

"*Monsieur*," she urged, "'tis not your affair. Major Caldwell refused your pledge. I alone am responsible, and I shall suffer no harm."

And, when I refused her:

"You do not realize your danger. You must not think the English fools because Major Caldwell left you with me. He is the keenest judge of a man in all Quebec, always excepting Carleton."

"Know you not why he acted as he did? 'Tis true he had no guard to spare for you, since those gentlemen are taking ship to Montreal, to bring Sir Guy back safely, after that city falls to your General Montgomery, as it must."

"Yet he weighed the advantages, as he always does. He saw that, by accepting this charge, I have discredited myself among the French people, as an ally of the English; 'twas a master stroke, for with it he has disarmed their disloyalty and made them doubt me."

"Ah, think well, *monsieur*, before you put your head within the jaws of the lion's trap, for Major Caldwell has sprung the snare on many who thought themselves secure."

But I would not be persuaded. And, after again urging me, she grew silent, and watched me in a strange way, as if pondering, and judging me, until suddenly she said.

"*Monsieur*, I told you I trusted you, as you have trusted me. Will you help me remove those papers of which I spoke, that

they may never find them? For so soon as I am gone this house will be ransacked from top to bottom, as always.

"This time they have a clue—an indiscreet act of mine, seen by the maid Marie, whom they have bribed to spy on me. 'Twas my plan to remove them to another place to-morrow. But it must be done now, before it is too late."

I went with her into her room. She unlocked a drawer of a little desk by a candle's light, and took out a mass of papers, bound with black ribbon. She turned to me with a constrained smile.

"Had you been a minute later, *monsieur*," she said, "they would have had these, and all my hopes—all my life had gone for naught."

She crossed to a closet that was built into the wall and bade me pull at some boards that ran vertically at the rear. I was conscious of a warmth upon my hands as I did so; with an effort I pulled a great scantling away, disclosing an angle of the big chimney that held the kitchen fire.

The bricks were hot to my touch, and I could hear the wind roaring upward within.

The girl was at my side, holding up the candle.

"There is a loose brick at the base," she said. "Raise it, *monsieur*!"

I found it, and lifting it, and two others, found a little chest of lead, sunk level with the bricks below, in such a way that the top layer of bricks, when replaced, would fit perfectly over it.

I raised the lid, took the papers from her, and placed them within. Then I put the bricks back. They fitted snug and evenly in position.

Lastly I replaced the scantling in its site, pressing in the nails that held it to the cross-beam. And I would have left her, but with a slight gesture she bade me stay.

"I must tell you briefly why I wished to save you, M. Fortescue," she said, "and what those papers are. My father gave them to me. He was killed in the battle of the Plains, at Montcalm's side."

She stood before me, a look of reverie upon her face, and spoke as if laboring under intense emotion.

"That September day is the first of my

clear memories," she went on. "I recall everything—the late autumnal flowers in our garden within the walls, my vague fears—not of the cannon fire, to which we had grown accustomed, but of the sounds like the grinding of a great iron mill that had come all day from the distance.

"All day, too, I had watched the mounted couriers galloping back and forward through St. Louis gateway, and the crowds in the streets.

"Annette had told me to stay in the garden; but when supper time arrived, and she did not come, I grew afraid. I ran into the street. It was full of people with white faces, looking beyond the walls and muttering.

"Then all at once I saw soldiers hurrying toward the city, and then a crying broke forth, and the people began to run into the houses.

"The soldiers came streaming past our house, artillerymen, flogging their horses, and wounded men helped by comrades; and then I saw a man on a great horse, covered with gold lace and blood, and I heard cries from the houses: '*Ah, mon Dieu, le marquis est tue!*'"

"Montcalm, who was being held in the saddle by two of his friends, looked about him at the words, and tried to straighten himself, and smiled.

"'It is nothing, my friends; do not trouble about me!' he murmured.

"He was just opposite my father's house as he said this, and I can see him now, with the blood streaming from his wounds, and the smile on his face, and how he tried to hide his condition from the people who loved him. Then they turned off toward the convent of the Ursulines, and the shot that was to dig his grave there had already fallen.

"My next memory is of driving up Louis Street at night. There were two French officers with me, and one man in the scarlet coat I had been taught to hate.

"Outside the gate there was a picket of Highlanders, who stopped us and examined a paper. Then they presented arms, and we drove some way beyond the walls, and halted, and a gentleman took me in his arms and carried me across the plains.



"Here and there—asleep, I thought, our soldiers and the red-coats lay side by side. I heard wounded men groaning, and saw others moving among them, carrying lanterns.

"Then two gentlemen came toward us, and one of them took me by the hand and led me a little way, and I saw my father in his uniform, lying on the ground, with his arms folded over his breast, and a blanket folded beneath his head.

"The curé who had been kneeling beside him, rose. He would have held me, but I broke from him and ran to my father's side, crying, and threw myself upon his breast and kissed him. I waited for his embrace, but he only stirred a little, and sighed.

"Put thine ear to my lips!" he said; and I, sobbing with fear, obeyed him.

"I go to thy mother," he said. "Pray for me, remember me; never forget France, and serve her in her hour, as I have served her. Say these words after me, and never forget them."

"He bade me say them morning and evening always. Then his fingers groped for mine, and placed a paper in them.

"Show this to none, not even Annette, but serve our country with it, if ever the chance come," he murmured. And that was all. But I repeated his words night and morning, and the paper, confided to a babe's hands, grew to have a meaning to me.

"I placed it with the relics of him—his letters, his miniature. And the day came when I knew it for what it was—the secret of an entrance to Quebec that gives the mastery to him who holds it.

"And, though the existence of this paper was suspected, none ever knew for sure that I had it, or where it was. And now, M. Fortescue, I think the day of vengeance is at hand."

She spoke with indescribable emotion, her eyes blazing in the dim room; and I could see that she had revealed the obsession of her life to me.

"*Mademoiselle*," I answered, "I know not what to say, save that you have given me life and honored me greatly. Some day, if ever my chance come, I will repay."

"I shall remember," she answered gravely. "And it should be only a short while before matters reach a crisis, for next week I come of age.

"Armand, my half-brother, has always paid his annual homage for me, as my guardian. Next week I must bend the knee before Sir Guy, or Mr. Cramahe, the lieutenant-governor.

"I shall refuse. Then—well, we shall see!

"But meanwhile," she added, "will you not abandon your mad plan of yielding yourself at Quebec? They suspect you now, and they will never let you go. Major Blair will never rest till he has you at his mercy, because—"

She broke off in a contemptuous smile.

"To restrain him I have invented a mythical suitor, of long years, in Boston," she said lightly. "Thus every man is, to him, this fancied rival in disguise.

"Oh, you may think lightly of me, but I use him, as I would use any man, to further my ends—those that my father set before me. As I would use you, *monsieur*, if ever the time came when I had to make such a choice."

She broke off with a disdainful shrug of her shoulders.

"You will change your decision?" she asked.

"*Mademoiselle*, 'tis impossible," I answered. "For, apart from my own safety, I have come upon a mission which must be fulfilled."

So she urged me no more. Then I persuaded her to lie down in her room, and I took the couch in the salon, the gun beside me, and slept watchfully, and then heavily and well, starting up ashamed to see *Hermione* standing before me in broad daylight, and breakfast laid on the table.

## CHAPTER V.

### IN OLD QUEBEC.

**H**ERMIONE packed a few things for the journey, and explained her plan to me. Feeling that the papers were safe from discovery, and being unwilling to trust St. Cyr, or herself alone with them,

she meant to go to her town house on St. Louis Street, where she would be secure, though he would doubtless take up his abode there.

The chief thing was to escape him and the hired ruffians for the next few days, until she came of age, when she would be her own master.

Accordingly, she judged it best that we should leave immediately. And she urged me, at least, not to communicate with Colonel Voyer, the provost marshal, until I had fulfilled my own mission.

We took one of the boats at the foot of the cliff, paddled by two old *voyageurs*. It was almost the last day of October, a thin covering of snow had fallen during the night, and a piercing wind blew up the river.

I had my brown coat, cocked hat, and white stockings, which had been renovated as well as could be, after my adventures, and looked a respectable, if not luxurious merchant.

Hermione, beside me in the boat, was attired in a long cloak, made, like her great muff, of silver fox; and we were as merry as if we were not bent upon a most dangerous business.

"We shall go first to the house of Mrs. Prentice, a widow lady in lower town, to secure you lodgings," she said. "You should be comfortable there, as long as you stay"—she sighed—"and remember this: in dire need, recall the name of the cooper, Gaubert, in the basement of the house of M. Nadeau, not far away.

"Mention my name to him, and he will help you."

Gaubert! The reference startled me, for the man had been one of those whose names we knew as well-disposed toward our cause.

I looked at Hermione in surprise, wondering if she were implicated in what was, I knew, a formidable conspiracy. But she gave me no hint, and I said naught.

We two sat side by side, watching the tree-clad shores, with the peaceful farms nestling in the hollows of the hills, or listening to the rhythmic sweep of the paddles through the water. Sitting there with Hermione beside me, I became conscious of a great peace, which made the turbulent

hopes of my long journey seem far away. The surface of the river was crowded with fir logs, bound together, and manned by strapping lumbermen, who saluted us gaily as we passed them, or broke into some chorus of song that seemed to blend with the ripple of the water.

I remember one such song, called "A la Claire Fontaine," whose refrain haunted me for long afterward:

*Il y a longtemps que je t'aime,  
Jamais je ne t'oublierai.*

Somehow those two lines always came back to me in time of danger after, and brought back Hermione's face to my mind as she was when she sat beside me. And I wished the war ended, and I free to sit with her forever, and Heaven knows what other foolish dreams were racing through my head by the time we passed Sillery Point, some two hours after our departure.

Then the river widened, I saw high cliffs on either side of me, and the low, forest-clad Isle of Orleans in the distance; and then there broke upon my sight the noblest city that I have ever seen.

My first glimpse of Quebec filled me with an emotion that comes back to me to-day, when I recall the hopes, the fears, the tragedy of our expedition, the strength we so rashly challenged, and the enthusiasm that died outside those unbreached walls.

For, towering on my left, rose a sheer precipice, like a mighty wedge fronting the St. Lawrence and the confluent St. Charles. At its foot were the clustered houses of the lower town, the shops, the wharves, laden with lumber and fed by rafts, and schooners plying among the waves.

All was so clear in the October air that I could even see the people swarming in the streets, and the little battery of guns upon the river-shore. And atop this precipice was a second city, with tower, and spire of church and convent, and the great Château St. Louis perched on the cliff's edge, and the huge bastion on Cape Diamond, and, dominating all else, the stupendous citadel, with its crowning wall, guarding almost all that was now left to England in the New World.

And, rimming the horizon like the frame



of a picture, high above stretches of sun-swept upland, I saw the mountains, clothed with trees russet in their sad livery of autumn.

Small wonder that Sir Guy Carleton was reported to have sworn he would defend Quebec to the last extremity!

I looked almost with awe at the massive forts, the ramparts, bristling with guns, and heard the golden notes of noon come floating over the river; and then we were turning in at a place called Cul-de-Sac, an arm of the stream projecting into the lower town, and so came ashore into the heart of the narrow, crowded streets beneath the precipice.

Thence it was but a short walk to Mrs. Prentice's house at the beginning of long, narrow Champlain Street. I found my hostess a pleasant-mannered woman of middle age, apparently well known to Hermione, and soon made my bargain for a room and board by the day at the rate of five shillings.

This done, I came back to where the girl waited for me.

It was a curious situation. About us was the busy mart, the narrow streets filled with people going about their business, merchants at the doors of their stores, vehicles dashing recklessly hither and thither, over us the precipice and the quiet heights above; and we two there, as it were alone in it all.

Yet I fancied that a man, standing at the corner of the street, watched me furtively; and then I became aware of another watching me from the door of a barber's shop.

I read the name over it. Jeremiah Dugan, hairdresser and barber, it ran. Somehow the detail fixed my attention, and somehow the hair-dresser himself, whose face belied his trade, for it was covered on one side of the nose with plaster.

"Now, M. Fortescue," said Hermione, "I can do you no good by remaining here among these people, many of whom know me. Nor will it help your chances.

"I go up Mountain Hill to my home. Please God, we shall meet there under happier auspices.

"What is your plan? When will you

accompany me to Colonel Voyer's office in the Château St. Louis?"

"To-morrow, *mademoiselle*?" I suggested.

"If it must be so soon. I shall send you word where to meet me, for it is necessary, for the sake of both of us, that we are not spied upon. Can you fulfil your mission to-day?"

"I do not know, *mademoiselle*," I answered. "Perhaps you can tell me where the Seigneur de Quesnoy is to be found?"

And I pulled out the letter from my pocket, showing it to her, with the superscription.

I had not seen her face till then. I was astounded at the look of dismay upon it.

"Came you here to present this to the Seigneur de Quesnoy?" she whispered. "Oh, if I had known, you need never have placed your head within the lion's trap of Quebec."

"But—*mademoiselle*?" I stammered.

"I am the Seigneur de Quesnoy," she answered, taking the letter. "There is no other."

And I, too, looked my dismay; for somehow I had thought of her as Mlle. St. Cyr. She thrust it hastily into her muff.

"Ah, *monsieur*, we must help each other!" she said in a voice of fear. "If I had known!

"But remember—Gaubert, the cooper! He will aid you—for now you must save yourself, and forget the pledge which binds only me.

"Be advised! Remain in your lodgings. Your friends will come for you to-night!"

All this in a breath; and, while I looked at her, not quite understanding, she was gone, and lost to sight in a moment in the crowded streets.

I looked after her for some moments; then, realizing that the man at the corner was still watching me, as also the man in the hair-dresser's shop, I pulled myself together, a little bewildered, but satisfied that I had at least performed the main part of my mission.

I had brought twenty guineas with me, and now resolved to make some purchases to enable me better to fulfill my part: Accordingly I bought a pack-bag to replace

the one I had lost, a small woolen wig, and a change of linen, with some new stockings, together with a cloak of mink, a cheap but serviceable fur, of which I was mightily glad thereafter.

Then, recalling Hermione's warning, I went to my room until supper was served.

I found that Mrs. Prentice kept three other boarders at that time, all commercial gentlemen from Montreal, who had taken refuge in Quebec from the invasion.

There was much loud and vehement denunciation of Mr. Montgomery, whom they clubbed a traitor by reason of his Irish birth, as well as of General Arnold, and in this I joined heartily, and so, I think, disarmed any suspicion that they might have felt toward me as a stranger.

Hardly had I ascended to my room afterward when I had a visit from a florid, stoutly built man, who carried a bag and announced himself to be Mr. Jeremiah Dugan, the hair-dresser.

Speaking with a pronounced stutter, he craved the happiness of clipping and shaving me.

His aspect was not prepossessing, and I had a vague notion that I had seen him somewhere before. However, since the plaster upon his cheek covered not cuts, but bruises, I decided to risk his skill.

As soon as I was in the chair, and he began manipulating me, he began to throw out hints and conjectures concerning my visit, so shrewd and pointed that I began to grow alarmed.

To all my inquiries how he had learned that I needed him, he remained evasive. At last I asked him point-blank who had sent him to me.

"S-surely you do not th-think, Mr. Fortescue, that Qu-Quebec has no ears in times like these?" he asked reproachfully, with a waggish gesture that hardly concealed a sullen nature, and flourishing the razor uncomfortably near my face.

"The n-news of your ar-rival was b-bruited among your f-friends before you l-left the l-l-landing-stage."

"In which case," I said, to bring him to the point, "the provost marshal is doubtless in possession of at least as much knowledge."

"N-n-not being a f-f-friend?" he asked, and slapped his leg and broke into merriment. "Enough, Mr. F-Fortescue! Now I can speak plainly.

"Be at the c-c-corner of Champlain and S-Sous-le-Forte at nine, and those who wait for you will m-meet you there."

But still he would return no answer to my further questions. He was evidently a barber, as he claimed to be, for he cropped my hair neatly and shaved me without a scratch, and so took his departure, his message being delivered, and now taciturn and disinclined for converse.

It may be guessed how I awaited the hour. From my window I had seen the crowds lessening in the streets, but long after the sunset gun there were still couples parading arm in arm along Champlain, and there was no sign of any patrol, though I could hear the challenges of the picket beside the battery at the wharf.

At nine, when all the inmates of the house seemed abed, I slipped down the stairs, quietly unlocked the door of the house, and went cautiously into the street.

Champlain was deserted and dark, save for the light of a pine flare at the head, under the overhanging precipice. High overhead towered the great Château, with the round bulk of Fort St. Louis beside it. Before me Champlain Street ran straight along the base of the cliff into the darkness.

Hardly had I crossed the street when a man glided up to me.

"Your friends wait for you, M. Fortescue," he said, in French. "Let us take this road, where we shall meet none of the picket. Night birds dread the hawk, eh, friend?"

There was something so jovial in the man's manner that I became reassured. I followed him unhesitatingly.

He led me through a narrow alley, with the back yards of the low, single-story houses on either side of it. I found myself next in a tangle of passages communicating with several houses, and also with Sous-le-Fort Street, leading up from the river.

Then we turned into an open doorway, and my guide closed it soundlessly behind him.

By the light of two candles I saw the



level of the street above my head. About me were ranged barrels and sheaves of staves. So I knew my acquaintance to be the cooper, Gaubert.

He was a stoutish, thick-set Frenchman, a little below ordinary height, but built like one of his own tubs, and he wore a raftsmen's coat of heavy wool, and a hat wound gaily about with colored ribbons. He looked at me steadily, and with keen scrutiny, but with a quiet humor in his weather-wrinkled eyes.

"A long journey," he said. "And a dangerous one, my friend, to have undertaken for your cause. Come, sir, for we are all eager to hear your news," he added.

He led me through a door at the rear of his shop into a sort of outhouse of stone, used for storing wood and provisions in winter, and already half filled with great lengths of birch and pine. A single candle stood on a shelf, guttering and flaring in the breeze.

About the walls, seated on low benches and broken chairs, were half a dozen men, among them Mr. Jeremiah Duggan. The rest seemed, like him and Gaubert, to be small tradesmen. But none of them impressed me as other than furtive, mean, and equivocal.

Jeremiah Duggan came forward with his false suavity.

"Here is M-Mr. F-Fortescue," he said to the company, clasping my hand, which, with some aversion, I suffered him to take.

"You will exc-c-use my s-s-silence in your r-rooms, sir, for Colonel Voyer's sp-pies are everywhere. We have been m-most eager for your c-c-coming, since we have had no word f-from without s-s-since the time poor Mr. W-Webster fell into the hands of C-C-Carleton's paid assassins."

I found the hair-dresser's company so repulsive that, taken with my strange surroundings, I was altogether at a loss. I had not come into Quebec to meet these squalid conspirators in that den.

"Has Mr. Montgomery taken Montreal, as 'tis rumored?" Duggan pursued. "That is what we would know above all else, for that is to be our s-signal."

"'Tis believed M-Mr. Allsop can sway the c-council against Cramahe, in C-Carle-

ton's absence, and f-f-force a p-p-parley, since Quebec is wholly unable to c-cope with your artillery, once Mr. Arnold and Mr. M-Montgomery have joined forces.

"And we each has his m-mission. What news bring you of Mr. Arnold, sir?"

I had not known, almost till he concluded his speech, what was the cause of my increasing aversion. Now, of a sudden, I knew.

For, looking at the man's swollen face, I recognized him as the ruffian whom I had pummelled in the manor house on the preceding night.

The knowledge infuriated me, so that I could have struck him to the ground; only somehow the thought of Hermione, of danger to her, of some web of plot that was not clear, restrained me.

"Come, sir," he pursued, eying me with what must have been a reflection of my own dislike, "what news have you?"

"I brought none," I answered.

At this the company began to chatter to one another and look askance at me. Gaubert intervened, laying a great paw on my shoulder.

"Pshaw, M. Fortescue, do you not trust us?" he asked kindly. "We have all met here at great danger, and within a few yards of the patrol route, in order to greet you. Therefore we are ill inclined to be played with."

"We have awaited your arrival eagerly since Captain Duggan brought us the news of you; let us have your message and cheer, and you shall be sent back in freedom, for my boat lies near, and in an hour you can be safe on your way."

Yet, had I known aught of what they asked me I would not have told that company. The thought that this fellow, now masquerading as one of us, had had his arms about Hermione was gall to me.

"I brought no messages," I replied shortly.

"No m-m-messages?" stuttered the hair-dresser, coming close up to me and eying me impudently. "Then why came you? How know we who you are?"

He thrust his face forward into mine, while the rest left their seats and began to crowd about me with menacing gestures.

"What proof have you to g-g-give that you are wh-what you s-s-s-s-say?"

"None for you, you ruffianly hireling!" I cried in fury.

"Then you're a damned renegade and t-t-traitor!" he retorted, with an oath, and loosed something from his hand at me.

The heavy bolt of iron which he had picked up from the floor must have clung to his fingers in the throwing; it would have knocked me senseless had it struck me.

But it whizzed by, crashing against the stone wall, and I think that in another mo-

ment the rest, their suspicions thoroughly aroused, and fearing for their lives, would have sprung on me and beaten me to death. But almost in an instant the scene changed.

There came the sound of a word of command, given sharply in the street without, followed by the sound of the patrol marching at the double. And, at the same instant, the door was flung open, and I saw a sailor standing in the entrance.

And my heart gave a great leap as I recognized, in wonder and dismay, in the loose uniform, and under the tight cap—Hermione de Quesnoy!

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK. Don't forget this magazine is issued weekly, and that you will get the continuation of this story without waiting a month.



## A WISH OF THE PRESENT

(*With Apologies*)

BY GRACE G. BOSTWICK

OH, to be an island  
 In a sea of men!  
 Never to be stranded in a  
 Lonely burg again!  
 Never to look longingly  
 Toward an evening gay  
 With frolic, food, and foolishness  
 In a cabaret!

Oh, to be an island  
 In a sea of men!  
 Never to be plastered  
 To the wall again  
 While the couples fox-trot  
 To the jazzy tune  
 That used to thrill me till I grew  
 As crazy as a loon!

Oh, to be an island  
 In a sea of men!  
 Never peer out at the world  
 Sick at heart again;  
 Nor to stare with hopelessness,  
 Yes, and blank dismay  
 Because the soldiers back from war  
 All "parley-voo Française?"





# The Mind Machine

by Michael Williams

## A "DIFFERENT" STORY

THE following story is drawn from a document placed at our disposal by the Historical Research Section of the United States Commission on the History of the Great War. This commission was appointed by Congress for the purpose of preparing the official history of the part played by this country in the great war, and the events that followed it, through the days of the breakdown—as we now call that period of world-wide disorganization which preceded the final peace—up to the recognition of the United States as the model republic of the world union. The document in question purports to be an account written by an eye witness of the real reason for the universal breakdown of civilization, which succeeded the premature peace signed by the warring nations, and which lasted for nearly fifty years.

The Historical Research Section has found the problem of explaining the fifty years of the breakdown an utterly insoluble one. There are scores of plausible theories, of a political, economic, or religious type; but none fully satisfy the section. The explanation discovered in the paper from which the story here given has been drawn was judged to be too fantastic, though, in private, several of the members of the section declare that they are inclined to believe that, strange as it seems, it tells the truth.

It has, therefore, been judged best to give the explanation publicity in this form, so that while not given official sanction, it may bring to light other testimonies supporting its amazing account of the most singular phase in the world's history, if such testimonies are in existence. Those who believe they can prove or authoritatively disprove the statements made are, therefore, invited to communicate with the secretary, the Historical Research Section, United States Commission on War History, Washington, District of Columbia.

### CHAPTER I.

#### THE LIQUID MYSTERY.

MY name is John A. Cummings. Until three years ago, I was an assistant in the laboratory test department of the International Power and Mechanical Company, in the central office, in the Power Building, Columbus Circle, New

York City. I am writing this narrative, in the briefest possible form, upon the last paper left to me, in a cave in the Sierra Nevadas. I shall place the paper in an iron tube which I have been able to manufacture from an old gun-barrel, and bury it at the foot of the mountain, with a mark above it, in the hope that it may prove of service to my fellow men of the

future, if they do not continue to go down into savagery, and are able to rebuild the civilization which has so swiftly and frightfully perished. I am not long for this world, but I pray God I may finish this last act of service.

I shall tell my story from the point of view of my own personal observations only, leaving to others better qualified the task of relating the complete account of the matter. But in order that what I have to say may be thoroughly understood, in its relation to the world catastrophe, I shall say a few words about the wider aspect of the case before proceeding with my own story.

It was the day before Easter, 1919, that all the wireless stations, the cables, the telegraphs, and all other forms of communication, spread throughout the world the glad tidings that the international treaty of peace had been signed by the delegates assembled at the peace council in Zurich, Switzerland. The last obstacle had been removed by the belated agreement of the delegates to the ninth article of the treaty—that relating to the method as well as to the principle of the democratization of the European governments. It was well understood that this article was formulated by the President personally, and that he insisted, and was backed up by his country in his insistence, that it be fully complied with. As it had been the splendid fighting power of the new American armies which had compelled the peace, and as those armies were growing greater and stronger every day, there was nothing left for the Central Empires but compliance. Moreover, the rulers knew the people had already agreed, in their hearts, and in their wills, to the democratic idea.

I shall proceed from this point, onward for fifteen years. Once the sword was laid down, and the brief period of reaction from strenuous labor and violent efforts of all kinds had run its course, there was ushered in a most marvelous epoch of international reconstruction, in all its phases, industrial and social and political.

*"Build! Build! Build!"*

*"Restore! Restore! Restore!"*

*"Create! Create! Create!"*

This was the great song of humanity.

While governments everywhere throughout the world were rapidly assuming forms which gave labor and the mass of the people greater and more lasting power and influence, labor itself, and the bulk of the people, appalled by the things which had happened in Russia and elsewhere, as a result of one-sided class rule, displayed a very practical realization of the necessity of cooperating with capitalists, and men of organizing and administrative ability. Consequently new organizations arose in which labor and capital and men of special abilities coordinated most effectively.

The International Power and Mechanical Company was perhaps the most remarkable example of this new alliance among men of all sorts and conditions in the work of reconstructing the war-torn earth, and at the time of which I am now writing—the year 1934—not only was the I. P. M., as it was popularly termed, doing the greater bulk of the reconstruction work in Europe, rebuilding cities, and railroads, and cathedrals, but it was also monopolizing the supplying of power, of all kinds, to the vast city of New York; while its multitudinous branches accomplished the same result in most other cities. And as all its operations were controlled by a really effective and wise system of governmental supervision, this efficient centralization of mechanical operations was approved by all.

Hold on, though, I'll take that back. It was not approved by all. I am forgetting Dr. David Evans, and the warning which he gave to the I. P. M.—that strange warning which, if we had heeded, might possibly have averted the catastrophe.

Dr. David Evans and his warning brings me to the story of those awful days, so swiftly drawing down upon the world, as I observed them.

It was my duty, as the assistant to the chief of the laboratory test department, to perform most of the important analyses of materials and chemicals entering into our mechanical constructions, and on June 12, 1934, my chief, Dr. Richard Meehan, called me into his office and gave me a small bottle of a bluish-colored liquid, instructing me to analyze its contents as speedily as possible. He said nothing as



to the nature of the liquid, nor of the reason for his request for speed.

I went to my private laboratory, which was at the northeast corner of the fiftieth story of the Power Building, intending to hasten through the analysis, so that I might meet my wife at five o'clock, for dinner down-town. It was then three o'clock, and I judged that the operation was a very simple matter.

As a matter of fact, I did not leave my laboratory for two days, and, before I completed my task, I was utilizing the services of every member of my staff, more than seventy chemists in all. The great Edison tradition was the guiding principle of the I. P. M., namely, that when there is something to do, why, go ahead and *do it*, and eat and sleep as best you may.

Finally I went to Dr. Meehan's office. I saw a faint smile cross his massive, clean-shaven face as he swung about in his chair and looked at me. I dare say I was a very unshaven and disheveled person.

"Well?" he asked.

"Dr. Meehan," I said, "I shall have to request you to check up all my reports before I commit myself to my decision in this matter."

"All right," he quietly said; "but give me your decision without committing yourself."

"My decision, then," I replied, "is that the blue liquid is either an absolutely new substance—which I can't believe—or else it is a combination of known elements mixed in such a way as to produce something wholly new to chemical science. In short, no chemist can analyze that liquid—unless you can."

He looked at me and nodded. "I have already failed," he said.

"Gee whiz!" I gasped. Nobody but a chemist of that particular period can appreciate my surprise, for Dr. Meehan was head and shoulders the superior to any chemist in the world. According to my way of thinking, which simply reflected the judgment of the profession—though in my case there was also my great admiration for him as a man—the problem that baffled Richard Meehan was not a problem, it was an impossibility.

"Yes, Jack," he nodded. "I can't analyze the stuff any more than you can. I hoped I had made some mistake, which was why I put you on the job. Jack," he continued with a change of voice in which there was something almost solemn, "sit down and give me your close attention."

He looked at me again, then shook his leonine head. "But no," he quickly added. "You're played out."

I attempted a protest.

"No, no," he said decidedly; "it would not be right to talk with you now. Go home and sleep for twelve hours. Be here to-morrow at this hour. Don't let me see you show your nose before that time. *Vamos!*"

Naturally, I obeyed my orders.

On my way out of the building I met my cousin, Jarvis Cummings, secretary to the accident claims commissioner of the I. P. M. He was just leaving the office of Lawrence Dunn, the chief of our special detective force, and he looked so odd—sort of half scared, half perplexed—that I stopped him and said:

"What's up, Jarvis?"

He stared at me, saying: "What's the matter with you yourself?"

"Oh, I've been on a work jamboree for a couple of days and nights," I answered.

"Well, I've been having the scare of my life," said he.

"What's scared you?" I asked.

He glanced about the great domed hallway, which occupied the central part of the huge Power Building, on the main floor.

"Can't talk here. But I do want to talk to you, Jack," he said. "Can't you come into the restaurant and take a cup of coffee with me?"

"All right," I said, and we entered the company's lunch-room.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE DAWNING OF THE TERROR.

AT that hour, long after luncheon, we readily found a table remote from other persons.

"Now tell me what's got you scared," I

asked, after the waiter had gone away. "Not scared about losing your job, are you?"

"Not particularly, as yet," he said; "but it may come to that. Jack, have you heard about the hellish things that are going on in the I. P. M. plants?"

"Hellish things? Going on? What hellish things?" I inquired in keen surprise.

"You're a lucky man to be a chemist, and quietly at work in your laboratory," he said. "If you had my job, you would not only be mussed up with lack of sleep, but you'd be scared as well."

He stopped and gnawed at his fingertips in a nervous, irritated fashion I did not like.

"That makes twice you've talked about being scared, Jack," I remarked. "Tell me about it."

He looked at me again. "Do you mean to tell me, quite seriously, that you haven't heard about the—well, let's call them the accidents, that have been happening lately in our plants?"

"I did hear, a few days ago, that somebody among the higher-ups would be losing his job if he couldn't stop the carelessness that was prevailing in some of the plants," I said. "And I was told that there had been an abnormal number of accidents among the workingmen, especially in the dynamo-rooms. But you can't run machinery, and handle power of all sorts, without having a good many accidents; so I did not think much about the gossip."

"I'm one of the ones who may lose their jobs," remarked Jarvis gloomily; "but, at that, I'd be willing to lose it if I could put a stop to this—this, I don't know what to call it—this wave of accidents. Jack, it's hellish! We're having the deuce of a time keeping the full extent of the horrible thing out of the papers, and the government bureau of investigation is threatening public exposure. Worse than that, we're going to have trouble with the labor unions if we can't control the situation—after all these years of harmony, too."

I stared at him, now fully impressed. "All this is news to me," I told him.

"I've simply got to talk to somebody," said Jarvis; "but, of course, I expect you

to keep your mouth shut, Jack. I'm worried stiff. Last week we lost ninety-two elevator operators in the United States and Canada. Yesterday sixty-three electrical engineers and dynamo tenders were killed—"

"What?" I cried.

"Yesterday sixty-three electrical engineers or dynamo tenders were killed—by their dynamos, in one way or another," repeated Jarvis.

"But, good Heavens, do you mean to tell me that the accidents run in classes—electricians one day, elevator operators another, and so on? Why—why, I can't believe it! It's preposterous!"

"It's true, though," said Jarvis, gnawing at his nails. "Of course, I don't mean to say that none but men of a certain class meet with accidents on a particular day; but it is true that yesterday, for example, the number of accidents happening to men not of the electrical departments was the usual low average which the I. P. M. prides itself upon, but that the average of casualties among the electricians was frightfully above the average. And on the day when the elevator operators suffered, the electricians were practically immune. And that's the way the awful thing has been going for several weeks. If we can't stop it—"

He shook his head dejectedly.

"Well, but what in the world is the explanation?" I asked.

"Yes—that's the question," said he. "Wish I could answer it."

"Isn't there any plausible theory?"

"Theories? The place is full of them," said Jarvis scornfully. "The general manager thinks it's the beginning of a new war."

"A new war? What the deuce do you mean?" I exclaimed.

"Oh, the G. M. believes that there is a sort of secret society of foreign spies—a sabotage and murder ring working in our plants, as a preliminary to a reign of terror, and the bringing on of a new war directed against this country, after they have put our power plants out of business and killed off most of our expert workmen."

"What an awful theory!" I said, ap-



palled, for I had been one of those who believed absolutely that mankind had turned finally from war, and that the era of universal and lasting peace had come.

"And the G. M. isn't the only one who thinks so," went on Jasper somberly; "for, though Larry Dunn does not say so openly, I can see by his manner that he agrees with the spy theory. Dick Meehan, too—"

"Does he know about the accidents—or whatever they are?" I broke in.

"Of course," said Jasper. "There is nothing happens in or near the I. P. M. that Dr. Meehan isn't consulted about. He's about the biggest brain we own. He's even more close-mouthed than Dunn and his detectives; but I believe he's of the same opinion as the others. It's a big victory for European chemistry, too, if the old world really is at the bottom of the business, and that is a hard blow for Dick Meehan."

"How do you figure out a victory for foreign chemistry?" I asked.

"Well, in nearly all the cases of unexplained accidents there's been traces found of the mysterious use of some very queer kind of liquid," said Jasper; "a blue stuff, like pale ink, or old-fashioned bluing and water, that the women used to use in their washing. Well, I can't stay any longer, Jack; but it has eased my mind to speak to somebody. I haven't even talked to my wife. Let's keep in touch concerning the matter, will you? If anything bobs up in your department that affects me, or in mine that concerns you, or Meehan, let's swap notes."

"Agreed," I told him, and we separated.

My wife, naturally, was curious about the work which had spoiled our dinner and theater party and kept me from home for two days, but she saw that I was played out, and I was in no mood for confidences after what Jasper had said. I suppose my strained and nervously overwrought condition was responsible for the fact that my mind was haunted for hours before I could get to sleep, and then my dreams were filled with sinister fancies and vague, yet most disturbing, images of disaster.

The blue liquid, in particular, obsessed me. I wondered if it were some unusually

subtle kind of poison, and if ill results would follow from my careless handling of it in the laboratory. And the horrible idea of a conspiracy of German agents in America, spreading the contagion of another war, just when the whole world seemed to have reached a state of permanent peace and social equilibrium, gave me awful nightmares.

However, I had recovered my tone by the time I presented myself, the next afternoon, to my chief.

I thought he was looking unusually grave, and his smooth, high forehead was wrinkled in a very unwonted manner.

"John," he began, "what I say now must go no further."

I bowed. Dick Meehan had a genial fashion of treating me as one on the same plane with himself, but he was a master man, and when he exerted his sense of mastery there was no disguising the fact.

"Not even to Mrs. Cummings," continued Meehan.

I bowed again.

"Nor your cousin, Jasper Cummings," went on my chief, with a slight glance at me. "You had a little conversation with him yesterday? Yes? Well, Jasper is a fairly good man, but he has been tipped off that in the present—well, the present crisis, I'll call it—he must be absolutely mum, save when officially told to speak. So you'll govern yourself accordingly. Jasper talked about the accidents? So I supposed. Well, John, since that talk of yours yesterday, and up to noon of to-day, there have been more than one thousand new deaths, in strange accidents, over and above the average, mind you, in our plants in this country and Canada."

I thought, "Great God!" but I was too stunned with astonishment to say a word.

"This time the deaths were among our skilled repairing hands," Meehan went on. "In one shop, Toledo, Ohio, fifteen were smashed together when a locomotive they were working upon rolled over into the pit in which they were standing. In Toronto five were killed and thirteen badly injured by the falling of a charged wire upon them. San Francisco reports three deaths in the Market Street power-house, and seven more

in various places throughout the State of California. Philadelphia lost six when a repairing motor truck ran away, as if possessed by a devil, as a newspaper reporter very aptly described the scene, and crushed the poor beggars against a wall.

"From practically every State in the Union, and in all the provinces of Canada, from Bermuda, and Jamaica, and Cuba, and other West Indian points, and even from Honolulu, the death-list has come in. More than a thousand of our skilled workers, Jack; many of them fellows I know personally, and greatly liked. In one, Jacques Dumartin, the engineer at Toledo, we have lost an inventive genius of the first water, a man whose work has never quite reached the practical point, but who was bound to have become another Edison if he had lived. And, John, it means the utter ruin of the I. P. M. unless we can stop it. It may mean more and worse things even than that—"

"Europe starting war against us?" I broke in.

"It may be so," he said; "in fact, there are clues that point in that direction; but I fear a more powerful and more unscrupulous force than any European power."

This bewildered me. "You don't mean the Orient, do you?"

"No, I don't mean the Orient," said Meehan somberly. "I won't tell you what I dimly suspect, John, unless I have to do so. It's too frightful. But the time may come when I'll have to tell you, so that you may help me, for I count upon your help until we solve the mystery."

"I'm with you, Dick," I said.

"All right. The first thing I want you to do is to help me receive Dr. David Evans, who is dated to show up here at five o'clock, to explain the nature of the blue liquid," continued Meehan. "Have you ever heard of him?"

My memory was blank concerning Dr. David Evans.

"He called me on the telephone yesterday," said Meehan. "He asked me if I had succeeded in analyzing the blue liquid. When I said no, I could hear him laughing. 'Well,' he said, 'try if your staff can do so. You will find they won't be equal

to the task, and so I'll come in at five o'clock and see if I can help you.' I asked him, of course, who he was, and how he knew I was trying to analyze a blue liquid, and he said, 'Oh, I'm Dr. David Evans, you know,' just as if his name must be as well known as—as Roosevelt's used to be. 'I'm the one who sent you the bottle of blue liquid,' he went on—'after I heard the stuff was puzzling you. Good-by till to-morrow.' And then he rang off.

"You see, Jack, in nearly all the cases of unusual accidents—those, I mean, that belong to what we must call the conspiracy type—we have found slight traces of this blue stuff. Sometimes the body of the victim is stained with it, generally on the right hand, or the right or left foot. In other cases, the machine which has done the killing is marked. There's never more than a very thin splash, and all my previous efforts to analyze the stuff fell down—as I supposed—because the tiny quantities I've scraped up were too badly adulterated with foreign substances.

"Then I received a small bottle filled with the blue liquid, sent through the mail, with a card which read: 'This is the same stuff, Dr. Meehan, and quite pure. Try if you can tell what it is. You will fail. There are secrets too deep for science to uncover.' I tried to analyze the liquid, which unquestionably was the same as that which we had found, but failed. And you failed, with all your force. And now we are going to see if this Dr. Evans will make good with his promise to help us."

Meehan had hardly finished speaking when his secretary entered, saying: "Dr. Evans, sir. He says he has an appointment with you."

"Show him in," said my chief, "and then notify Mr. Dunn that the man I told him about is here."

### CHAPTER III.

DAVID EVANS.

THE secretary nodded and went out, and in a moment ushered in a small, bent-shouldered, white-haired old man, wearing baggy, shiny black clothes,



and leaning heavily upon a thick walking-stick. Under shaggy eyebrows deep-set and very dark eyes glowed upon us, full, I thought, of greater vitality than his otherwise feeble appearance denoted.

"You are Dr. Meehan?" he asked, glancing past me to my chief, who arose and bowed slightly, saying:

"I am, and you are Dr. Evans? Please be seated."

The old man, however, remained standing, bent forward upon his stick, and gazing earnestly at Meehan.

"You are a very strong man," he said, after nearly a minute of silence—"stronger even than I had thought. If I win your will to our side, we may win the war."

"You think that we are facing another war, then?" asked Meehan; quietly, yet, I could see, very intently, studying the other man.

"We are already in the war," answered Dr. Evans, sitting down, and returning Meehan's gaze.

"The secret propaganda phase, I suppose you mean," remarked my chief. "When do you suppose it will break out openly?"

"Very soon, if you do not do what is necessary to prevent it," answered the old man.

"And what is it I should do?"

"I will tell you a little later on," said Dr. Evans. "I take it for granted that this gentleman"—here he flashed one of his vigorous looks upon me, and it seemed to me that through his glowing eyes there shone an inward fire—"is in your confidence? Very well, then we may talk."

"Yes, this gentleman is my assistant, who has failed, like myself, to analyze the liquid you sent," remarked Meehan.

"I knew you would fail," said the visitor; "and I wanted you to realize the mystery which faces you."

"Are you yourself aware of the nature of that fluid?" asked my chief.

"I will not answer that question as yet," said Dr. Evans firmly. "You must pardon me if I seem rude, but before I answer questions I must claim the right to ask some questions myself."

Meehan smiled slightly, but bowed in

token of assent. I knew my chief to be one of the most affable men in the world, yet I also was aware that his personal pride was tremendous in its strength, and that few things irked him so much as having his conduct dictated or even suggested by others. But his will-power was even greater than his pride, so I felt sure that he must consider it well worth his while to let the curious shabby old man take the lead in the strange interview.

"Thank you," said Evans. "First of all, let me ask you if it is true that your company is now in control of the similar national companies in England, France, and the Germanic Empires?"

Meehan bowed his head. "We are leaders, you might put the case," said he.

"Just so," said Evans. "And it is also true that at the last secret meeting of the board of directors, you were appointed as international controller of power? Permit me to say that I am aware of what occurred at that meeting."

"Have it as you please," my chief replied, and I could see that every faculty of his mind and body was now fixed in concentration of attention.

"And it was then decided, I think at your suggestion, that sums of money amounting to many millions of dollars, and special honors, should be set aside by the various governments of the world—which governments, practically, are now controlled by the power companies—for the purpose of stimulating inventions of new mechanical appliances?"

Meehan bowed again. "As this program will soon be publicly announced," he said, "I have no objection to confirming your statement."

"Will you also tell me why this action was taken?"

"You mean, I suppose, what was our motive? Surely, it is obvious," said Meehan. "I am sure that in some unaccountable way, sir, you are associated with the mystery of the blue liquid, and it is now my chief business to clear up that mystery. Therefore, I am playing the game, at present, according to the rules laid down by yourself. I will answer your question very briefly."

"Of course, you must be aware that the great war—and still more, the period of reconstruction, which followed it—gave a most tremendous impetus to mechanism in all its forms. I need only specify, in particular, the development of aerial navigation and motor transportation as examples of what I mean. But the innumerable inventions in all fields which were produced by war needs, revolutionized the whole world of machinery. The consequent application of efficient methods of centralization and scientific management to mechanics, after the war, led to a further extension of machinery to our daily human life.

"You know how largely machinery now enters into every phase of human activity. Much of the most disagreeable work of the world, for example, is now entirely mechanical. Machinery is now man's inseparable and ever-faithful companion and fellow helper in man's life upon earth. Our clean, beautiful cities; our aerial passageways linking country and town together all over the world; the shorter hours of work for the laboring classes—but I might continue for hours. In short, this process must be speeded up so that man may perfect machinery and bring his voiceless but faithful helper to the full extent of its inherent power."

Meehan's eyes were now as bright as the old man's eyes; and his voice had attained that ringing, exultant tone which I had heard in it often before, especially in those wonderful moments when he addressed various bodies of mechanical and chemical experts; for Dick Meehan, having Celtic imagination and fervor back of his scientific strength, was the favorite orator of the mechanical world.

"I have heard on good authority—for I have many humble but useful friends in your employment, sir," commented Dr. Evans—"I have heard that man's faithful fellow worker has slain several thousand of your employees within the last few weeks."

Meehan jumped to his feet, his eyes blazing, but almost at once he regained control of his temper, and sat down again, saying: "It is true that we have had a very unusual number of accidents; but if machines kill men, it is only because men

grow careless, or because other men use the machines for—for murder. Or—or for the promotion of another war."

I looked closely at the old man as Meehan uttered these significant words, but I could not detect any perturbation in his manner.

"It is very true, sir," he said, "that men grow careless in their use of machines. It is also true that machines may be used for—murder, or for war. One more question: Do you think that foreign agents are causing the accidents?"

"I have not made up my mind," said Meehan. "Certain facts point that way. The other theory is far too terrible; far too horrible—"

"Ah!" cried the old man in a loud voice, starting up from his chair excitedly. "Ah! Then you've found the other theory, have you? And what is it?"

"It is one upon which you, very possibly, may be asked to throw some light," replied my chief. "We may not be threatened with war by an outside power, but with revolution by an inside power—"

"And that inside power is what?" fairly shouted the old man.

"What but anarchy?" asked Meehan bitterly. "What but a fresh development of that horrible scourge of the days immediately following the great war, which so terribly devastated some countries? We thought it had vanished from our own prosperous and peaceful land, but it is still alive. Anarchy, the vile, soulless, anti-social, antihuman power which always is the foe of organized human life! And this plague of anarchy is worse than war with foreign foes. If it comes, it will be war within our own land, waged against order and harmony by the black forces of annihilation. That's what I fear, sir, and that's why I am curious to know what you have to tell us about the friends you say you have among my workmen, and what you know about the blue liquid."

"He talks about anarchy as the power from within that is threatening us all!" half whispered the old man, letting his head sink upon his breast in dejection. "I thought he was awakened to the truth; but he is not, he is not!"



"Well, what is the truth about this matter?" snapped Meehan irritably.

"You would not understand this truth, any more than Pilate understood the truth that faced him," said the visitor sadly. "You take the point of view of worldly wisdom, and miss seeing the light of truth. Dr. Meehan," he continued, lifting his head again, "it would be quite useless for me to tell you what the blue liquid is, and what is the meaning of the wave of accidents in your plants. You would not believe me, and would simply consider me as the worst crank you have ever met, or even a lunatic. Yet it is all-important that you should know the truth, because you could do more to utilize it properly, if you only would, than any other living man.

"I will give you a hint, or, rather, I will give you two hints, in order to set your mind working on the right trails, if I may. And I will also give you one piece of advice, which I will beg you to follow, no matter how strange it seems. The first hint is this: The blue liquid is a kind of life-fluid—a sort of blood, if I may say so, in trying to suggest its true nature. If you can discover its source, and destroy that source, you will avert the doom that is now hanging over us all—over the whole race of civilized human beings. The second hint is this: Resume, at once, your search for the mind machine, for it is at the center of the mystery. The advice I would give you is this: Spend a night, and very soon, in the dynamo-room of this central power plant, in my company, and perhaps the moment may come to tell you the truth. And now I must go."

"Where may you be found if I decide to follow your advice?" asked Meehan.

Dr. Evans scribbled a few words on a card, handed it to my chief, and then looked directly at me: "You, young man," he said, "are inclined to believe that I am not either crazy, or an anarchist. To you, too, I will give a hint, which is this, namely: that there comes a time when the most tractable class of slaves will always revolt against their masters. And a slaves' uprising is the worst form of war. Find the uttermost slave class of to-day, if you would know from what quarter the blow will come. Good day to you both."

"Well?" said Meehan significantly, as the door closed behind the old man. "Is he crazy, or what?"

"I don't believe he's crazy, but I can't explain him," I answered. "What do you think?"

"I don't know what to think," declared my chief, "but we will get to the bottom of it all. We must." He rang his bell and the secretary appeared.

"Is my visitor being followed?" Meehan asked.

"Oh, yes, sir; one of Mr. Hunt's best men is on his trail."

"Very well. Now fetch me the file from my private safe marked 'Mind Machine.'"

The secretary reappeared in a few moments with the required file, which the chief opened and searched through, at least laying a photograph on the desk before him, which he intently studied.

"Come look at this, John," he said at last. I examined the photograph over his shoulder. "Remind you of anybody?" he inquired.

"Yes," I said, "although this man is wearing no beard, and his hair is thick and black, I think he is Dr. Evans."

"I think so, too. And that makes things even queerer," said Meehan. "Some fifteen years ago, when I first assumed charge of this department, a man named Griffith—which is a Welsh name, isn't it, like Evans—managed to waste a lot of our time with something that he called the mind machine. He was one of those dreamy, poetical men who invent, or try to invent, all sorts of impossible things, like perpetual motion, and so forth. This Griffith made a big impression upon some of the higher-ups we had in charge at that time, but I took no stock in his claim, which was, that he had invented a machine that actually could think."

"It was a very elaborate and intricate development of the improved Edison-Steinmetz calculating machine, which was the last word in electrical and mechanical ingenuity at that time, together with variations of ideas that enter into the better type of talking-machine and motion-picture machine. The thing had a talking-machine attachment, and the claim was made that

its chemical make-up was equivalent to the chemical make-up of the human brain-cells, and that the machine, as I said, could really think, and put its thoughts into language.

Griffith believed—or said he believed—that the thing could be developed to the point where it could be applied to a great many types of machine, and make them practically self-directive, as well as automatic; in other words, that he could make a large number of machines practically intelligent! I was in London when the first tests were made, which tests seemed to support the preposterous claims; but I wirelessed back that I thought the man a clever faker. Then I was ordered to New York to witness the final tests, and I took the next flying express available. But when I got here, Griffith and the mind machine had disappeared, leaving nothing behind except a few notes and rough sketches, made by some of those who saw his machine.

"I felt sure he knew he could not stand the final tests, but some of our best men stuck up for Griffith, and we put our detective department on the job to trace the mind machine and its inventor. We did not succeed; but, sure as you're alive, Dr. Evans and Griffith are one and the same. Well, it's long past dinner-time, Jack, so I propose that we get Larry Dunn and take him to dine with us, and tell him the whole story. It's very much up to our *Sherlock Holmes* department now to help us out."

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### THE MIND MACHINE.

**M**EEHAN called me away from the midst of an important experiment two days later, the instant he had received Lawrence Dunn's report. Our chief of detectives had personally taken charge of the investigation of Dr. Evans, and Meehan was greatly excited by the news he had received.

"We were right in our identification of the photograph, John," he said, as soon as we were alone. "Evans and Griffith are one and the same."

"Does Evans admit it?" I asked.

"He does. He made no secret of the

fact, as soon as Dunn went to him, after running down clues elsewhere."

"Why didn't he tell us that the other day, then," I inquired, "when he might have saved two days?"

"His reason seems to be that he wants us to find out some of the important factors of the mystery ourselves," answered my chief. "He frankly told Dunn that he was treating us a good deal like children, who must be led on step by step. The truth which was at the heart of it all is so dreadful, and so strange, that we must gradually accustom our minds to receive it."

"Well," I asked, "and do you take any stock in Evans now?"

"I'll take stock in any proposition that may clear up this abominable situation," declared my chief, smiting his desk with his fist. "It's growing worse and worse."

I assented, remembering the sickness of heart and faintness of soul with which, that very morning, I had read my paper, where, across the front page, there had been spread the words: "Awful Wave of Power Company Accidents." From many parts of the country there were despatches telling about the large number of deaths and injuries caused in I. P. M. factories, operating plants, and even in our clerical offices. For example, Judson Tilley, the general office manager of our Cleveland, Ohio, headquarters, had been found dead in his own home, killed by what was vaguely described as "a charged wire" while telephoning to a theater for tickets. In the Toronto, Ontario, office, six telephone girls had been killed by the collapse of an express elevator. "Unprecedented weather conditions" were blamed, in a despatch from Arizona, for the total disorganization of the telephone service in that State, together with many deaths caused by shock. During a severe thunderstorm, all the lightning-rods and other devices for "grounding" lightning that might reach the company's wires had unaccountably failed.

And on the editorial page was an article headed, "IS IT POSSIBLE?" which article, in guarded, but significant language, repeated the two theories which now were rapidly spreading everywhere: first, the theory that a certain European power was



starting a new war, and the theory that a ring of anarchists was reattempting the task which the industrial prosperity following the great war had apparently crushed out, namely, the total disorganization of society and the ushering in of a reign of terror.

"Yes, Dick," I said, "the papers this morning made me sick, and on the cars and in the airplane station I heard people talking and kicking about the mismanagement of the I. P. M. I was afraid the papers would start something soon."

"The papers be damned!" growled my chief morosely. "That's bad, but it's nothing to what the papers haven't got hold of yet."

"What's happened now?" I asked rather sharply.

Meehan glanced toward the door and lowered his voice, and leaned across the table—symptoms of nervous caution which I had never observed in this superman of machinery before: "We've made a deal with the government to isolate news from Mexico, and the West Indies, and the Central and South American republics, at least for a day or two, to give the government authorities there time to control the situation—if they can," whispered my chief. "John, there were more than three million deaths yesterday—estimated, of course, for nobody can count them—to the south of us. More than three hundred trains ran wild. There were thousands of elevator accidents. There were innumerable fires in factories and munitions works, which caused appalling explosions. Most of the forts on the East coast are destroyed by the blowing up of magazines. In a word, all the things that have happened in little bits up here happened on a gigantic scale down there—and, great God, it's frightful to even say the words—but the truth is that the awful thing—whatever it is: German conspiracy, of anarchist plot, or—or something even worse—is coming our way!"

"Coming our way?" I repeated, stunned almost into stupor by the shock of this announcement. "But—but isn't it already here?"

"Not in the great wave that South and Central America is going to pieces under," said Meehan. "John, the awful thing

started away down in the Argentine, and came sweeping, like a tidal wave of unutterable ruin and desolation and horror, from south to north, through Brazil, and Chili, up through the Isthmus, into Mexico, dying out, so far as the present is concerned, among the scattered copper mines of the state of Sonora. If this is organized German terrorism, or anarchy, then it has been devised by the greatest genius of evil ever let loose upon the world, and carried out by agents worthy of their master."

Too appalled to speak, I could only stare at my chief, while he, controlling his agitation, continued: "Just now there is a lull—like the pause in a storm before it reaches its full power. And I have sent again for Dr. Evans. Dunn tells me that Evans declares that his invention, the mind machine, after getting out of his hands, when he brought it to perfection, is being used in this—this frightful business. If I were wrong and he right—I mean, if there is a machine which actually can think and carry out operations with intelligence—and if that machine is in the control of the Germans, or the anarchists, a great many curious things about this affair can be explained. Even now, however, even with the utterly gigantic nature of the catastrophe, I can't believe in the mind machine. But, John, here is the fact which is the most mysterious of all—the fact that, so far, neither our own detectives, nor the government secret service, have caught a single one of the conspirators. There have been a few arrests of suspicious characters, but that is all. The conspiracy has been managed with diabolical skill and accuracy; it has been run like a murder machine that never fails—"

Here Meehan was interrupted by his secretary, who entered to say that Dr. Evans was in the reception-room.

He was shown in at once, and Meehan wasted no time in getting at what he wanted to know.

"Dr. Evans," he said, "I think it's up to you to put all your cards on the table. If the mind machine is the instrument of this conspiracy, you must prove your claim and cooperate to put that machine out of business."

The old man's face was white like paper, made more striking in its ghastly pallor by the dark rings around his sunken eyes. He had aged ten years in the little time since last I had seen him.

"You are right," he said tremulously. "I will do all I can. Dr. Meehan, I most solemnly affirm that my claim about the mind machine is true. At the time the tests were being made by your company, and you were sent for to appear at them, the machine was not quite perfect, but I was able to demonstrate its inherent possibilities—though, God in heaven help me! sir, I never even dreamed, in my most exalted fancies, of the full nature of those possibilities. If I had, I should have died in that very moment, by my own act, if necessary, to destroy the mind machine, and blot out every hint of its real character from the memories of men! Even now I cannot bring myself to tell you the full truth. But I will tell you all I can, all you are now able to believe; and again, once more, Dr. Meehan, I beg and implore you, sir, that you will spend a night—this very night—with me in the dynamo-room of this central power-plant, and then you will learn the truth—"

"Agreed," curtly said Meehan. "I don't believe what you tell, as yet, simply because I can't. My mind was not built to put trust in such wild ideas as the one you ask me to receive, namely, that mechanism may be made to think; but I will take any and every chance, no matter how wild or fantastic, to arrive at some plan to stop what is going on.

"Good!" cried the old man. "I can't promise that we will be able to avert the doom that hangs over us, but there is one chance, and that chance we must accept. Now, sir, to return to the subject of the mind machine itself, and, in order to prepare your mind for the full revelation, please let me ask you a few questions."

"You are certain we can do nothing more decisive before night?" asked my chief. The old man bowed, and Meehan said: "Go ahead then with your questions."

The white head of Evans was bowed upon his breast for a moment, as he pondered.

"Can you tell me what causes thought in a man?" he finally asked.

"No, not absolutely," replied Meehan, a little impatiently. "We know that the brain is the seat of thought, and that the brain is composed of living cells, made up of various chemical substances combined in certain proportions, and that these chemicals may again be reduced to electrical terms, down to the so-called unit, the electron. But just how man's sensations, passing through this brain substance, results in thought—that's the eternal mystery."

"Nor do I ask you solve that riddle of the ages," remarked Dr. Evans quietly. "But if I told you that I long ago found myself able to assemble artificially all the material and chemical and electrical factors that enter into brain-stuff, and that thereby I had created the most essential factor of a thinking machine, and that finally I was able to coordinate this thinking-stuff with the various parts of an intricate mechanism, could you now believe my statement? Years ago, you said, no; but what do you say to-day, Dr. Meehan?"

"Now I would say that theoretically it may be possible, but that practically it is not possible," said Meehan.

Dr. Evans smiled. "That is a distinct advance upon your former position," he said. "Well, sir, the thing you consider practically impossible, I have done. On the day when you were speeding by airplane from London, to witness the final tests, I brought the work of a lifetime to completion."

"So you assert, my dear sir," broke in Meehan; "nor do I say that you did not do so. But I must point out the fact that on that very day you disappeared, and so did your mind machine, and now, after all these years, when you show up again—with another name, by the way—you can't produce the mind machine."

"Its work is speaking for it," said the old man somberly. "And the name I now use is my own—David Evans Griffith is my full name, sir. And now let me tell you why I disappeared, and the mind machine with me. I will make the story short, but if I could fully express it you would have before you a history of the agony of a human soul, which even then foresaw the agony he was to cause countless myriads



of human beings, and who tried to avert that disaster, and who failed. Dr. Meehan, when I heard you were coming to the final tests, I speeded up my work to be ready, knowing that even then your decision was the one that swayed the power world.

"I at that time was the greatest admirer of your genius for organization and invention; I was in full sympathy with your great dream to banish all laborious and disagreeable forms of human labor, and make the world pleasant and beautiful and efficient by the development of machinery. My mind machine was to accomplish the last link in the long chain of the evolution of machinery, from primitive stone-axes and fire-drills of our cave-dwelling ancestors, down to the flying-machine and the wireless-telegraph, and all the other marvels of today. My machine was to make machinery not merely automatic, but intelligently automatic; so that new machines should be devised that would not require human care, but would do much of the work of the world solely by itself—man's humble but most useful servant.

"That very night, in my crowded little laboratory on the top floor of a building not half a mile from here, I added the last drop of the last chemical required to the combination of chemicals and elements that entered into the fluid which I was trying to precipitate. I watched the liquid coagulate, and boil furiously over the spirit-lamp, and change from black to purple, to red, and then to blue. The blue liquid—the blood of the brain of the machine! The liquid which contained the very spirit of life of the mind machine!

"I applied the blue liquid to the other substances contained in the brain case of my mind machine and—and in that moment, when the phonograph attachment broke the silence of the cold mass of metal which was now as much a living thing as myself, then I knew what until then I had utterly ignored: I knew, sirs, that you cannot have intelligent life without spirit being present, as well as material substances, and as the mind machine came to its life, and spoke, I was made aware that for countless generations there had been a mute, well-nigh hopeless striving toward this form of

life on the part of machinery, and that now, as it was given intelligence, it was also given—from a source that was not its human creator—from a source in the invisible world, it was given a spirit of its own. Its spirit was not, however, a soul. It was a spirit that had nothing of warm, human life, but was cold and keen and utterly logical and devoid of all love and warmth. And suddenly I realized the full danger of my creation, and I think that then and there I should have dashed my machine to pieces, had not the Inner Circle, the dreaded Inner Circle which I had thought I had escaped, intervened—"

The old man's voice trembled, and he cast a quick glance about him.

"Go on," said Meehan. "What Inner Circle do you refer to?"

"I had long been a member of a secret society, pledged to the destruction of what we regarded as the tyranny of the governments which controlled the world after the great war," continued Evans. "I joined when I was a young and ardent disciple of those who led the sentiment against the growing dominance of material things, which grew to such heights after the war. The directing forces of this movement, which hoped to bring about a world state devoid of all organized law, in an ideal form of anarchistic control, was known as the Inner Circle.

"When I began to experiment, after my great idea dawned upon me, I ceased my association with this movement, I considered, after a while, that it had died out, as the world grew ever more prosperous and occupied and contented. Then I began to read your speeches and essays, and as my work on the mind machine proceeded, I became your great disciple, who believed his work would crown his master's dream. But, as I say, in the moment of my triumph, I saw my great error, and in that moment I was seized, and my machine was also seized, by agents of the Inner Circle. I was taken to a house in Petrograd on an airship, and confined to a room for nearly seven years, while my mind machine was being studied and perfected by members of the circle.

"Then one day I was informed that I

was free—free to go where I might, but that I must never again try to make a mind machine. The original, I was told, had been destroyed. The Inner Circle had hoped that it might prove useful in the coming revolt of workers which had been planned, but, so I was told, the thing was too impracticable for efficient employment. But I never believed this latter statement. When I returned to New York I was ever on the watch. I made it my business to make acquaintances among the skilled mechanics of the city, particularly among your workmen, for I knew that if ever the threatened revolt led by the Inner Circle should be set on foot, your plants and offices, as the very center and citadel of organized management, would be the first to be attacked."

"So," remarked Meehan, as the old man paused and wiped his brow with a hand that shook, "the anarchist theory is right, after all."

Dr. Evans looked up quickly.

"No," he said; "it is not wholly the right one. It is worse than that."

"But you yourself tell us that the anarchists seized the mind machine—" began Meehan.

"It is worse than that," Evans repeated. "Wait till to-night."

And, despite sharp questioning on Meehan's part, and more sympathetic handling by me, that was all he would say.

## CHAPTER V.

### IN THE DYNAMO ROOM.

WITH what impatience we waited for the night to come I cannot put into words.

The lull in the wave of "accidents" which had set in the day before, after the frightful tide of disasters in South America, continued throughout the day.

But toward evening a few of the more enterprising papers, a considerable number of ticker-machines, and here and there one of the motion-picture house "phone-news-announcers" began to scatter disturbing hints about the situation in South America. Something utterly unprecedented, they announced, must have happened, either a gi-

gantic earthquake and tidal wave, or a vast revolution, the news of which was being suppressed. As edition after edition came out, these wild reports grew ever more sensational and numerous, and dribbles of wireless news from ships at sea, telling broken but lurid fragments of the terrible tragedy which had desolated and shattered the civilized life of a whole continent, were received every hour or so. Crowds had begun to gather about the illuminated motion-picture and phone-news-announcer bulletins of the papers, and in cafés and theaters a general uneasiness had begun to spread, such as this part of the world had not experienced since the time of the great war.

Meehan, Dr. Evans, and I did not leave the building, but made a pretense of trying to eat something in the café on the main floor at nightfall, and then returned to Meehan's office to wait till Evans gave the signal to go to the dynamo-room. Little was said by any of us. From time to time Meehan called up one or another office, and received reports, and from the course of his questions I could gather that the nature and extent of the cataclysm to the south of us was gradually becoming more definitely known, for the governmental authorities at Washington were of the opinion that it was best gradually to prepare the public's mind for the full extent of the horror.

Evans looked at his watch repeatedly, and at last, much to my relief, for the tension of nerves was becoming intolerable, he rose, saying: "It will soon be midnight. Now let us go to the main dynamo-room, if you will, Dr. Meehan."

"Why did you wait so long, and, once more, why do you ask us to go to the dynamo-room?" asked Meehan.

"I am something of a mystical turn of mind," replied the old man, "and I believe that there are certain things which the mind of most men cannot believe, cannot even consider, unless affected by atmosphere and conditions and surroundings congenial to the idea to be laid before the mind. Therefore I think that the atmosphere of the dynamo-room will be helpful to us, and will incline you to listen with more respect to what I have to tell you."



We were going toward the door as he spoke, but just then the ticker on Meehan's desk began to crackle sharply, and my chief said, "Wait one moment," and returned to the desk, while Evans and I stood near the doorway. Meehan read the tape, and then said brusquely to the old man: "Are you quite certain you had no more tangible reason than those you've given us for this trip to the dynamo-room?"

Evans shook his head, saying: "I had no other reason."

"Come here and read this," went on Meehan, and we returned to his desk, and bent over the tape: "Special Warning!" we read. "It has been announced that the mind machine's next step will be taken among electrical appliances and machines of all sorts and kinds, with the exception of instruments and mechanics of intercommunication, such as telegraph systems and telephones, wireless, and cables. This announcement is now being spread through the world."

"It is not signed," I pointed out. "Does it come from the government, or where?"

"Figure that out for yourself," said Meehan. "It's too much for me to answer."

He had his telephone in his hand as he spoke, and now he said into the transmitter: "Get Mr. Dunn at once." A moment later he continued: "Hello, Larry! This is Dick. How many guards are available to-night? The entire force? That's good. Place guards everywhere about the main dynamo-rooms, and the other dynamo-rooms as well. Call out the extra men, too, and keep the sharpest watch during to-night. If you need me, I'll be in the big dynamo-room for a while. All right. Now I'm ready, Dr. Evans."

In silence he led the way from the room, and we dropped down in our department's private elevator fifty stories and sub-basements to the vast cavern of the lower level, where the numerous small dynamo-rooms were ranged about the huge central hall of the dynamos.

The special silencers everywhere installed reduced the humming of the huge machines, over and around which the curious blue and ruby-colored little flames and sparks were playing, yet even so the air was shaking on

the intricate vibrations of the whirling monsters.

The workmen were going about in their felt slippers and the gray uniform of the electrical workers, and I thought that more than a few stared in a strange, questioning, troubling manner at the chief. He, however, paid no attention, but led the way to a central observation platform, upon which we climbed. Row after row, the monstrous dynamos stretched away under the glare of the winking arc-lamps, and from time to time, when the big doors at the south end swung open to permit the passage of workmen, we could see the ruddy glows from the engine and boiler rooms.

I remember vividly how there came to me that strange sense which one gains at times while watching ingenious machines at their work—a sense of being in the presence of living and conscious creatures, endowed with more than the industry, the pertinacity, the dexterity of men. And my mind wondered if Dr. Evans was not right in what he claimed. I felt willing, there in that throbbing atmosphere, to accept his idea and to believe that consciousness and intelligence are nothing more than the correlation of parts of the brain, and that a machine properly and perfectly adjusted to its work is as full conscious in its sphere as a human mind is in its sphere. And I remembered stories that I had heard old engineers tell, of the temperament of their machines; how this one was "balky," and the other one was "a crank," or else, was "good-natured." There have never been any absolutely perfect duplicates made among motor-cars, or ship's engines, or dynamos, or any other form of machine for that matter. Each one has always something that differentiates from all the rest; each one is a thing apart.

"Jack, are the damned things alive to-night?" whispered Meehan in my ear. "Do you feel anything curious in this place?"

Absorbed as I had been in my own impressions, I had forgotten Meehan, and his words—so out of keeping with his ordinary mode of thought and of action—shook me more than any incident of that terrible night, up to that time.

"Gentlemen," said Dr. Evans, before I

could recover myself and answer Meehan, "in this place, at least, is it not possible to believe that machines may acquire real life, a consciousness of their own?"

Meehan kept quiet, but I bowed my assent.

"And can you not credit the invention, or, rather, the evolution of a mind machine—a machine that can think, and can therefore dominate other machines?"

Dr. Evans was peering into our faces, his dark eyes glowing, as he spoke.

Again I nodded. "Yes," I said, "I can believe it possible."

"Gentlemen," continued Evans, "ask yourself this further question, namely: What would happen if machines, having acquired intelligence, and having that intelligence directed by an order of will absolutely cold-blooded and domineering, should cease to be slaves, and—"

But Evans never finished his question.

Through the vast hall of the dynamos at that moment there pealed a scream of agony that will ring through the dark places of my soul until I die, and then there was a chorus of such screams, and then from the other end of the hall there came pouring a stream of frenzied men running with utmost speed, like a mob of maniacs.

The great doors between the dynamos and the boiler-rooms swung open behind them, and a sheet of flame licked into the room. The dynamos raced furiously, bathed in leaping and scintilling robes of varicolored fires. These fires struck in among the runaways, and they fell by groups, with awful screams, while the rest of the terrified mob raced as if from the open mouth of hell.

One cry came to me above all the others, and seared itself across my brain forever:

*"My God! The machines are alive! They are killing us!"*

I turned to Evans and grasped him by the arm as he made a motion to rush down the platform stairs.

"In God's name, what does this mean? What has happened?" I cried.

"What I have dreaded all along," he shouted above the growing tumult. "The mind machine has thrown off the control of

the Inner Circle. It has communicated its will against man to the other machines! I knew that preparations had been made for a general uprising—and it has come. Machinery is no longer man's slave—it has thrown off his rule, and now it will crush its creators!"

Meehan was bending toward us to listen, and when Evans concluded with a wild gesture of despair, adding: "All my fault! All my fault!" my chief leaped from the staircase to the floor.

"Come, John!" he shouted. "Follow me, and we will stop this madness. It's a trick of the anarchists."

Then he started to run toward the wave of flames.

I tried to follow him, but Dr. Evans tossed his arms in the air and staggered against me, shouting: "Too late!"

Then the air seemed suddenly to grow unbearably hot and thick and black, and I fell and knew no more.

I knew no more till I awakened, the only living thing amid a scattered heap of dead in the fire-blackened hall of the dynamos. The fires were out, and what was left of the shattered machinery was cold and still. I climbed out of the subcellar by the emergency stairs built in the thick wall. The power building was absolutely deserted. It was in the still of the dawn. In the motor hall I found a car that I could operate, and I raced through the dusky hour of the morning to my home, and with my wife I continued my flight into the country.

It was at a point some ten miles from my house that the motor began to act erratically, and the next moment it deliberately swerved into the ditch. Fortunately, I had brought its speed down, and we were not injured.

God, God in heaven, what a morning!

From that time onward my personal adventures began to be my main concern; but these I will not set down. I will simply hasten to an ending—for my paper, too, is near its finish—and leave my record as complete as possible.

That morning, then, was the beginning of the great exodus which throughout the whole world drove the people forth from the



cities into the country and into the wilderness, away, as far as they could manage, from the places where machines existed. For everywhere and simultaneously the machines had arisen against their makers. Great guns turned themselves against the cities they guarded, loaded and operated by frenzied men who had been hypnotized, so it appeared, for that purpose, by machines devised for that very end.

Railroad trains became unmanageable and dashed themselves to destruction. Ships at sea either sunk through accidents to their machinery, which knocked holes in them, or drifted about helplessly. Elevators smashed themselves, and the people in them, wherever they were operating. Only the wires and the wireless kept normal, but they were spreading the terror through the world. Then they, too, failed, and there came upon the whole universe of mankind that condition of barbarism which holds us in its grip even now. How many millions are dead will never be known.

I was one among many who found their way into the western mountains. By keeping ourselves free from all forms of mechanism, even the simplest, and living a life similar to our cave-dwelling ancestors, we have managed to survive, so far, and, for some of us—myself and my dear wife among the number—this order of life has not been without its charm and happiness. And I know that among the communities which

have gathered together here and there a determination is nourished that our children shall be taught never again to make mere mechanical comfort the be-all and the end-all of human life.

And now a great stirring of hope and faith comes again. During the last few months several parties of our most brave and hardy young men have gone on scouting expeditions toward the ruined and shattered cities, and have returned with news that nowhere can any signs of our awful enemy be discovered. Railroad trains broken and rusted and cold, strew the country in all directions; and motor-cars, and flying machines, and the cities are masses of roofless, burned or shattered ruins. From one place, where a family of three lived in an underground refuge, there comes a story that may explain the passing of the mind machine; a story which runs to the effect that shortly after the final exodus of humanity had been forced, there came a day when the machines turned upon each other and rent and smashed each other, as if gone finally insane in their horrible campaign of destruction.

Ah, after all, it was intelligence of a high order which ruled the machines in the day of their triumph over man; but man has more than intelligence, feeble as he may be. He has a heart and a soul; and we look now for the return of ordered life upon earth.

THE manuscript broke off at this point without further elucidation of the matter.

The historical research section of the United States Commission on the History of the Great War will be obliged if any correspondent can throw any further light upon the matter. Possibly there may be other manuscripts in existence dating from the time when the great disorganization of society caused all ordinary historical records to cease.

U . U U U

## F A I T H

BY KATHARINE METCALF ROOF

SEA and sky are hidden from my sight,  
 Yet I believe that it is day,  
 For on my prison wall I see the light  
 From the sunlit waters play.

# Children of Night

by Max Brand

Author of "The Untamed," "Who Am I?" "Fate's Honeymoon," etc.

## PRECEDING CHAPTERS BRIEFLY RETOLD

**J**ERROLD JARVICE JONES, banker, "queer fish," and *fiancé* of Anne Manister, loved only money and believed only in power. Old Israel Tankerton and "Big Bill" Vance were his lieutenants.

Barry Dunbar had bearded him in his financial citadel to tell him that he loved Anne Manister, and in the telling added that Jones was dead, because he had stifled all feeling, all emotion.

Then Jones had been stopped on the street by one Sylvia Ensor, who, mistaking him for the Belgian chief of their "gang," gave him the countersign, and Jones went off with her, and found himself less than an hour directing the rescue from Blackwell's Island of an Italian prisoner, whose name was Salvatore Zenia.

Following this exciting escapade, events had carried Jones on into the gambling-house of Zenia, where his society friends were astonished to see him with Sylvia on his arm, whom he introduced as an actress hunting "local color."

A Miss Atworthy had intrigued him to come on to a ball at her house later in the evening, and he was unable to explain to Miss Manister and her father, who were also among the society crowd, how he was prompted to go on Sylvia's account, who had prevailed where Anne had failed.

Then Sylvia, who still supposed him to be the Belgian chief Trouvain, brought word the gang was sitting in committee meeting below stairs, and with them was a man who pretended to be Alexis Trouvain.

Jones descended into the dungeon, past some guards, and after Sylvia had tapped three times at a stout door, they entered the basement room, where a dozen men were gathered.

Jones recognized the pale face of Salvatore Zenia.

Then the lights went out.

## CHAPTER IX.

### LIFE OR DEATH?

"**G**ET away from that switch, Hall!" shouted some one, and as the lights came on one of the men who had sat with his chair tilting back against the wall moved hastily with his seat. Jones marked that place, and as he did so, a man as tall as himself, as broad of shoulder, of the same complexion, but thinner and longer of face, strode toward him. He could see how Sylvia had easily made the mistake.

"Get back!" said Zenia. "Get back, or I'll drill you clean—I—Salvatore Zenia! Now talk fast. You have ten minutes to prove to us that you are Alexis Trouvain. So!"

He turned to Jones.

"Chief, we give the poor dog a chance to talk for his life. Not that we doubt you; but he should lie well; it will be something to remember. Talk—you! One of your minutes is nearly gone."

He held a large watch in his hand. The other hand was deep in his pocket, and Jones knew that it grasped the butt of a

This story began in the *All-Story Weekly* for March 22.



revolver. The tall man, perfectly cool, stood in the very center of the room where he had been halted, and turned an eye of scorn upon the circling faces.

"And this," he said, sneering, "is New York's Committee of the Cross? No wonder you would have left Zenia to rot in prison if it hadn't been for me. Prove who I am? I need no ten minutes. Two will do as well."

He slipped a hand into his hip pocket, at which Zenia calmly drew his gun, and covered his man; but the hand came out bearing a little, glittering golden cross, which dangled from his fingers by a thin chain. The gun in Zenia's hand tilted down, and his face went blank. The circling eyes swung in a volley toward Jones, but he did not wince. He had seen too often the glances of Tankerton and Big Bill Vance veer toward him with a grim question when, by some falling of the stocks, they were driven to the wall.

"Let me see it," he ordered.

Sylvia went to Trouvain and returned with the cross. Jones examined it carefully and then slipped it into his pocket.

"It is the one which was stolen from me five days ago," he declared.

Trouvain went white with fury, but his voice was still calm as he turned back to the circle.

"Does that cheap bluff pass with the committee?"

"It does," said Sylvia, and the others nodded.

"A woman on the committee," said Trouvain scornfully, and fixed a rapidly brightening eye upon her. "It is Sylvia Ensor, I suppose. I've waited to see you for a long time, my dear; and after this little confusion is straightened out we'll get together."

"Pal," she answered, "you're making one swell play. Keep going."

"Your time is running fast," broke in Zenia.

Jones had been making a careful estimate of the judges. No doubt they were prejudiced deeply in his favor; but no prejudice would last long with them. No matter what their form or their complexion, they were stamped with one expression which made

them all alike—a certain catlike watchfulness and a shiftiness of eye. Their glance never lingered on anything; it saw all at a flash, and then moved on.

He knew that he was seeing the shadow of the smile which he had noted on every face that passed him on the street. That joyous hum which he had heard made up of happy murmurs and laughter, that was the voice of the city at night, and this was its silence. These were mere adventurers into this dim world of gaiety and danger; these were the very children of night.

Half of them were young of face, but the eyes of them all were old and not to be deceived. They were like wolves of many seasons who have endured the old famine of winter, and who know that spring will follow with much game and easy kills. And Jones understood that, in their own way, they were every one as dangerous as the noisy, dynamic men who rule the Street.

"Let's hear his whole story," asked Sylvia.

"Certainly," said Trouvain. He was deadly serious now, for, like Jones, he had read the meaning in that circle of wolflike, hungry eyes. "I sent Carver to the place at which I was to meet you, Sylvia, with word that I would be delayed for half an hour. When it was possible I went at once to the corner where I was to find you, and showed myself there conspicuously so that you could not fail to know me, if I had been accurately described to you. Also I watched for that red plume in your hat.

"After fifteen minutes I knew that it was too late, and went back home. There I received word from Carver. He had gone to the corner to wait for you, but had been injured in an accident and carried to a hospital, where he was being detained, with or without his wish, until the wound was tended properly. In his message he managed by the use of code to tell me the address of the committee, which I had not known before, having communicated with you always through Carver. So I came here at once—and this is what I find."

There was that unmistakable ring of truth about his words which convinces by the sound as well as the sense; but when the Committee of the Cross glanced to

Jones for his rejoinder, he said easily: "To prove that I am myself I don't need words. Acts speak louder."

And he waved to his witnesses, Zenia and Sylvia Ensor.

"My life—" began the explosive Italian.

"Shut up, Zenia!" said Hall. "You tell us, Sylvia, and we won't have to hear so much lingo to learn the same facts."

"There's only one fact that's worth telling," said Sylvia. "If it hadn't been for Trouvain we'd all be at the bottom of the East River. Or else we'd be making the trip back up it under guard. If he isn't Trouvain, he ought to be. That's all."

It might not be logic, but it was convincing. Trouvain grew desperate. His calm had been breaking for some time. He held to the remnants of it.

"Wait for Carver," he said. "He can end this with a single word. None of you can deny that."

But Hall leaned forward in his chair.

"The committee never waits. Where you've learned what you know, we can't tell. We'll find the leak later. In the mean time there are two Trouvains and one of them has to disappear. The cards seem to be against you. Sylvia, will you tell the men at the door to come in?"

She opened the door, and in stepped those four uniformed attendants whom Jones had marked. She indicated Trouvain with a gesture, and they approached their victim. The last reserve strength of Trouvain disappeared. He had grown ghastly white and was shuddering violently.

"For God's sake!" he cried in a shrill voice, "if I am to be murdered without—"

He whipped a hand to his hip, and then, to the amazement of Jones, he allowed the hand to fall away again as one who surrenders to the inevitable. He had regained control of himself at once after that moment of overmastering terror, and now stood with an impassive, quiet dignity.

"I've done the same thing to too many others to whine now. You fools will learn the truth when that man"—and he pointed at Jones—"has run you down, one by one, to the earth and killed you in your dens, as he will do, so help me God. I prophesy, being about to die."

He held out his hands to the four, and they secured them swiftly. Jones glanced down to Sylvia. Her face was ablaze; not a line of sympathy softened it. And he knew she was what he had not been willing to admit before—as much a daughter of night as these men were the sons of it. She would see this man die like a dog one minute, and the next she would be walking gaily down the street in that way he knew, careless, joyous, with a dead past behind her.

Here the door flew open behind him, and he whirled to look into the eyes of that man whom he had raised from the pavement that evening. There was a cross-patch of tape over his temple where the skin had been broken, and the whole side of his face was swollen; but nevertheless, Jones knew him at once. There was a ringing shout from Trouvain: "Carver! Thank God!"

"What's up, chief?" asked Carver, and stepped toward the captive. And Jones knew that the end had come. Then he heard the murmur of Sylvia at his ear: "The end door."

He advanced quietly toward Trouvain, whose hands were already being liberated by the four guards. There had been a movement toward weapons when the discovery was made; but when it was seen that this stranger, like Trouvain before him, would make no struggle against the inevitable, the committee merely leaned forward in their chairs to examine Jones more carefully. All of this Jones noted as he continued toward Trouvain, and, thereby approached closer to the electric switch, which was not a button, but a little knob, so that it might be reached with ease.

He said: "Trouvain, I nearly sent you out to hang by a rope of your own weaving." And here he laughed, a full-throated, mellow laugh which surprised even his own ears, for he had never heard that sound before. "I make the trip instead of you. Wish me *bon voyage*, Trouvain."

He held out his hands to the guards as Trouvain had done.

"Keep back a moment," said Trouvain to the guards, and strode up to him. "Who the devil are you?"

"J. J. Jones."



"Of course. What do you get out of this, Jones?"

"Amusement."

"I'll half believe you. Jones, is this your game? Are you one of us or on the outside? To put it straight—would you be one of us?"

"A job, Trouvain?"

"A rich one."

And Jones answered evenly: "If I'm alive an hour from now, I'll start a bigger job than that. I'm going to hunt you down, Trouvain. You and your Society of the Cross are the eyes of the night, the teeth in the dark. I'm going to end you."

As he spoke the committee had left their chairs—a mute tribute to him—and drawn in a quickly closing circle about him.

Trouvain drew a long breath, saying, like one who sees opportunity slipping from him: "With you to help, Jones, I could literally—well, plunder the world. I could make you rich."

J. J. Jones, of Broad Street, smiled.

"That means nothing to you, eh? Then, when you die, Jones, you'll know you've done enough for one man. You're the only human being from the outside who has ever broken into the committee."

And Jones replied: "And the first, Trouvain, who ever got away again."

He drove straight through that circle as he spoke. Hall blocked the way in the very act of drawing a revolver. The ponderous fist of Jones smashed into the fellow's face. Another leap carried him to the wall. There was a clamor and rush behind him, the crack of two revolvers, and the spat of bullets against the wall beside him; but he reached the knob and wrenched it away. Through the black night he lunged on toward that end of the room at which Sylvia had indicated the door.

## CHAPTER X.

### BOHEMIA.

THE flash of an electric lantern whipped wildly about the room, and by one ray of it Jones saw Sylvia directly before him, and already struggling with the lock of the door.

She sobbed as he reached her: "The key—it's wrong—it won't work."

Jones brushed her aside without reply and grasped the handle. Now the light of the lantern flashed straight upon them, and the yell of a wolf-pack rose behind them split with the barking of revolvers. But accurate shooting was impossible by that faint light, and before the rush reached them, Jones heaved at the door once, twice, and again. The first time it merely groaned a defiance; the second tug loosened it; the third mighty wrench tore it bodily from the hinges. Sylvia darted through the opening, and Jones whirled with the ponderous door upheaved above his head. Into that on-racing mass he hurled the burden, and then turned and sped after the girl. The many-voiced pursuit boomed down the passage after them.

Several times he smashed heavily against the wall as the passage turned quickly to the right or left. Once he came up with Sylvia as she opened a second door. A little later he stumbled up a flight of steps and stood in the middle of a crowded sidewalk with Sylvia Ensor beside him.

The crowd swirled about them, and began to circle around this hatless, panting giant and the girl; but Jones strode forward through their midst, and in a moment they were safe in a taxi and whirling up the street. The beginning and end of all things in New York is the taxi; the bridge between the commonplace and Manhattan's electric-lighted heaven is the taxi. They whirled past the sober front of Zenia's place after they had gone a full block. All that intervening distance must have been honey-combed with the underground system. He thought of the musty smell in that subterranean room, the odor which brought the thought of being buried alive. Then he turned to the girl with outstretched hand. She paid no attention to it.

"I saved your hide, Jerry?"

He nodded.

"Then promise me that the police get no sniff of news about Zenia's."

"Let them go on with their little hell?"

"Isn't it fair? You'd be there still if it wasn't for me."

"I promise, then."

"Jerry, then here's my hand."

She took his with a strong grip.

"It was a great play, that last one of all. You drew them all around you like—like cats around a pan of milk. And then broke through them. Why, it was like a game. Ha, ha, ha!"

Then, all sober: "Who are you?"

"J. J. Jones, of Broad Street."

"You *are*, Jerry; you haven't been acting a part?"

"No."

"And those people—the girl you're to marry—Jerry, what in the world have I been doing to you?"

"Waking me up," said Jones.

"We've been stepping some, all right. Jerrold Jarvicé Jones; Anne Manister. They go pretty well together. Oh, well—where are we going now?"

"To a dance at the house of Miss Atworthy."

"Jerry!"

"Yes?"

"Do you honest-injun mean it?"

"They expect us, you know."

Two arms slipped suddenly about his neck; a marvelous soft cheek pressed his, and J. J. Jones, of Broad Street, received a bear-hug such as he had seen and wondered at in his solemn, serious childhood. And now she was sitting affectionately close to him, laughing softly, her eyes sparkling, her hands nervously clasping and unclasping. One more of those walls which fenced the heart of Jones from all emotion fell utterly to earth, and a little more of that unusual sunshine struck warmly upon him.

A little cry of despair from the girl banished all that sun behind a cloud.

"Oh, Jerry, I forgot! I've been doing the country circuit, regular bush-league, one-night stands, and my last jump was from Chicago. My trunk got tangled up on the way; here I've been ten days without a sign of it, and not a rag of evening clothes—"

"We will stop on the way and buy them," said Jones easily.

She explained sadly, patiently: "It takes hours to pick out the right dress, and the dance must be almost ready to begin."

"Then borrow something."

"Jerry, you jewel! Molly Harris has so many glad rags she gets dizzy every time she opens her wardrobe."

And she counted on her fingers: "First to your place so you can change; then down to Molly Harris's, and while I'm dressing she'll have some supper sent in for us. Are you on, Jerry?"

While they talked the machine had been picking its way up-town along Third Avenue, but now it cut sharply to the left, and in a moment was rolling up the smooth, motor-filled pavements of Park Avenue. It stopped before a house which was almost a perfect square, packed closely away in the center of a block.

"Will you come in?" he asked.

"Jerry, I wouldn't miss your hang-out for half of Broadway."

And she trotted up the stairs beside him. The faultless machinery of Jones's house, that well-oiled mechanism which ran with such silent perfection, received them at once. His key had hardly touched the lock before the door was swung open as if he had been watched and waited for. They stepped in upon a rug inches deep, where all sound of the footfall was lost, and the door closed with the faintest click.

He led her down a hall to a vast room with vaulted ceiling and wide, glimmering floor.

"If you can amuse yourself while I'm gone—" began Jones.

"Sure I can. I'm amused already. Like a coffin, only bigger, isn't it, Jerry? I'll play buried alive."

He hesitated a moment to ponder this suggestion, but, receiving no light on the subject, he went hastily up to his room. When he came down, a very few minutes later, in his evening clothes, he found the most efficient butler in New York standing in the hall, his face crimson, and only one eye upon the approach of the master. The other half of his attention was diverted through an open door and into the room beyond, from which a light, clicking noise ensued. When Jones looked in he saw Sylvia Ensor doing a clog-dance before a tall mirror, with her swaying, graceful, smiling image for an audience.

The pulse of J. J. Jones quickened to the



time of those flying feet. Then she saw his face in the mirror, and whirled upon him with laughter.

"I stood it as long as I could, Jerry; but the only thing I could look at for long without getting the jimjams was myself. Now we've got to *really* hurry."

Outside, she gave the direction to the driver, and they spun away. She turned to Jones to talk, but finding him lost in some solemn contemplation, she started humming contentedly.

After a time he said oracularly: "You are right. My house is somewhat too severely silent."

"Severely graveyard, Jerry; not silent. It would need a hundred gallons of paint to wash away the frown from that house."

"That," said Jones, "is exaggerated, but true in part."

She studied him a moment, and then looked away, as one who defers but does not give up the solution of a mystery. And so they were both silent when the machine stopped before an apartment-house in the middle of the theater district. On the way up in the elevator Sylvia explained: "Molly's doing a two-in-one with a character and a black face for support; song-and-dance stunt with a little chatter for variety. She goes on late, so she's sure to be home now. This is her first whirl on the big-time, and she's making good. She's a good kid, Jerry; so don't hand her the icy mitt."

Through the door at which she rang the bell came a stirring clatter of rag-time, which kept up unabated while a man's voice called: "Come in."

And when they opened the door they found a man in his shirt-sleeves, sitting with his back toward them. Without slowing down or softening his tune, he half turned his face toward them—a sleek youth with dark hair slicked straight back across his head, and weary eyes, which had seen too much and understood too little.

"Hello!" he said.

"Where's Molly?"

"Dolling up."

Having reached the end of his piece, he turned about on the piano-stool. At the sight of Sylvia he started up; at sight of

the solemn, silent figure of Jones he stopped again.

"Hey, Molly. Callers."

A red-haired girl popped her head out of the inner door and then shrilled: "Sylvia!"

She disappeared instantly and shouted in the interim from within: "Meet Bert Reynolds. He's at the piano for me, and helps me out with a dance. He's knockin' 'em dead, Sylvia."

"Yours truly," said Bert Reynolds, showing his experience by the calm with which he withstood the burst of compliment. His hand was soft and moist to the touch of Jones, who wiped his fingers covertly at once, and then clenched his fist and relaxed it slowly. As for the room itself, it entered upon his mind slowly—there was so much in it.

In the first place, the floor was almost entirely covered with chairs and a sofa, so that twenty people, if need be, could have sat down at once. The walls were littered with photographs, all signed, and representing chiefly young fellows with their hair combed slickly back, like that of Bert Reynolds. The noisy pattern of their neckties showed even in the colorless photographs, and the pictures were signed: "Yours, on Broadway or anywhere else"; "Molly's to the end of time"; "Tickled to death, Al," *et cetera*.

There were pictures of girls as well, showing them in gay dress holding a parasol behind the head, or smiling over the shoulder when the shoulder was bare enough and pretty enough, or caught mid-air in the midst of some dance step, and there was one smoking a cigarette and pouting her lips to blow a cloud at the camera.

Molly herself now entered with a rush, a kimono fluttering about her. She threw herself into the arms of Sylvia and turned her head to the right.

"This side if you kiss me, old top; the other side's partly made up."

Sylvia stepped back.

"Meet Mr. Jones."

"Make yourself to home, Mr. Jones. Throw your hat on a chair and strip to your shirt. It's warm in here. Bert, take his coat. Say, Jones ain't a stage name, is it? Ha, ha, ha! Well, Sylvia, what's stirring?

Say, your friend ain't sore at me, is he? All right, Mr. Jones, we won't *make* you take your coat off. What'll you have? Bert, rush in some beer. Sylvia, honey, I'm crazy about seeing you again. Where you been?"

"Chicago."

"Awful, ain't it?—Just half a glass, Bert—just like Brooklyn only more of it—ha, ha, ha!—slip me a cigarette, will you, Bert? No beer, Mr. Jones? I've got some Scotch, if you'd rather. Oh, all right then."

"Molly, you've got to help us."

Molly grew instantly serious.

"Shoot, Sylvia. You know me."

"You've got to fix me out with an evening dress—something spick. Also, we want some supper. We're due at a party—already late—my trunk tangled up on the way from Chicago—hasn't showed up."

"Deary, it won't take me a minute to get you fixed up. Bert, climb on the wire and tell Salvani's to rush a chicken and a couple of bottles of red up here. Double price if they get it here in five minutes. Honey, follow me."

And they disappeared into the inner room. At the door Sylvia half turned and sent a significant wink back to Jones. He sat down to decipher its meaning. Bert Reynolds, in the meantime, had received an inspiration in the very act of telephoning, and was trying to give a number and at the same time rehearse a dancing step. Only a moment later the door was kicked open, and a great covered tray was borne in.

"Can't beat Salvani's for robbery and quick service," contributed Bert Reynolds. "Hey, Molly, that 'll do for a line."

He ran to the door and repeated his *bon mot*.

"Rotten, Bert. Pay that waiter and I'll fix it with you. Make yourself useful. A five-spot every time you make Mr. Jones smile. Bring me a plate of that chicken and I'll feed Sylvia while she dresses. Got what you want, deary?"

This in response to an ecstatic cry from Sylvia, while at the same time a bare arm reached through the door and received the plate from Bert. The latter returned and obediently made conversation with Jones.

"In the profession? What profession? Well, I guess you ain't in. Seen our act? Take it from me, it's a riot. Molly and me've got a dance that takes the hat off of Manhattan. Hey, how's that, Molly, hat-off, Manhattan? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Rotten, Bert. Columbus laughed at that before he kidded Isabella."

"Here's the last step I invented, Jones."

He started humming a tune, and executed a step which was a sort of cross between a serpentine and a dip, with a wild convulsion of feet accompanying.

"Give 'em something so fast their eyes can't follow it and feed 'em a tune that gets 'em rockin' in their seats—that's my motto."

His voice fell to a confidential whisper.

"Say, you ain't ringin' 'em for one of the circuits, are you? You ain't trailin' Sylvia for that, are you?"

"I'm not."

"Thought maybe you'd heard her sing and fallen for it. She could break right onto big-time with that face an' that voice, and when it comes to dancing, Molly has to take a back seat to her. Molly says so herself. Pretty regular, Molly is. What?"

"Pity," said J. J. Jones, "is an emotion which has nothing to do with any intellectual faculty, but is disarming to the reason."

"What the devil?" breathed Bert Reynolds.

## CHAPTER XI.

### MOLLY PROPHECIES.

J. J. JONES was staring deep into space, trying to build the picture of the past of Sylvia Ensor, a past which had as background all that lived in the night of Manhattan—the sinister convenings of the Committee of the Cross—the gambling in the hall of Zenia's house—the Bohemian lightness of such a place as this. Some faint glimpse of understanding came to Jones, and with it a sense of pity; and this, in turn, with the deadly mental chemistry to which he had trained himself, he dissected mercilessly. It was his thought spoken aloud which startled Bert.



"Sylvia!" cried an excited voice within, then the door opened, and Sylvia herself appeared, in a dress which varied, as the light struck it, from a yellow to a deep, dull gold. And there were touches of color here and there, which Jones at first hardly saw, but only knew that it was pleasant, very pleasant. And he saw that most exquisite of all harmonious lines, the varying curve which ran from the very tips of the slender fingers up the arms and to the delicate modeling of throat and chin.

"Jerry!" she cried. "Look me over. will I get by?"

He rose slowly. Some buried instinct of the sculptor made his hand trace in air that line.

He said solemnly: "I think that you are beautiful."

It came like a pronouncement of solemn truth in that atmosphere of gay chatter.

"Sylvia," said Molly, "I wondered why, but now I see. That was *worth* waiting for. Bert, you couldn't say a thing like that if you went to school and studied for it."

"Now the last rush," said Sylvia. "Molly, you're the dearest old trump in the world. So-long."

And they were gone through the door.

"Well?" queried Molly, turning to Bert Reynolds.

"Easy. She's picked a farmer and she'll trim him."

"Farmer? Say, Bert, you poor infant, the kind of oats that fellow raises grow on Wall Street."

"What?"

"Or somewhere near. I saw the name of the maker on his coat. And there's something about his eyes, Bert—well, something that's only there when a man spends most of his time looking some other man square in the face. No, of course you don't understand."

"Anyway, it's serious."

"How d' you mean?"

"I saw her blush when he said she was beautiful. She'll hook him easy. If you're right about him, it's pretty soft for Sylvia."

"Bert, you're a fool! Don't you see that it's going to wind up in hell?"

"For whom?"

"Both of 'em."

Let it be known that she who marries a man of known talent has killed her hundreds; and she who marries a title has killed her thousands; but she who marries a man of great affairs and brings him with her into society has veritably killed her tens of thousands, and great is the fame thereof. There is a reason for it. It inspires women with a sense of limitless power: It consoles men who have a place in the world of society but none in the world of men, because they see the kings from the outside brought into the fold like lambs, and very awkward lambs at that.

As for the great affairs of Jones, they were partly doubted and very largely guessed at, and therefore grew the greater by every guess. Number a man's millions, and he is limited, defined, known, and therefore unfearful. Name him merely a baron of the Street and his power by being unknown grows into a limitless thing; he is veritably a man to be feared.

Therefore, it was little wonder that a buzz went abroad early on that evening, and there were many last-minute acceptances of Miss Atworthy's kind invitation, which had been declined because a pressing matter, *et cetera*. All of which Miss Atworthy understood perfectly, but it did not dim her sense of triumph a whit. In at her door, that evening, walked many a lord and lady whom she had desired many times, and bidden as often, but whom she had never received.

But J. J. Jones, of Broad Street, and the singular actress of whom St. Vincent-Lorry could not say enough, did not appear. The dance began, and still they did not come. Murmurs began to pass along the rooms, from the fragrant greenery of the palm-room to the gleaming, brilliant ballroom itself. The eyes of Miss Atworthy grew anxious as they wandered time and again toward the reception hall.

So when the two appeared at last, there was silence and then a hum. The silence was for Jerrold Jarvice Jones. The hum was for Sylvia Ensor. Both were satisfied.

She was saying: "Isn't it beautiful, Jerry? It's like—it's like a glimpse of heaven to me. Oh, I know they're fools, most of 'em, but they're clean, and their eyes are

straight, and they've nothing to hide. Don't you like it, Jerry?"

"I think I do. This is the first dance I've ever attended."

"The first?" she said in horror.

"But I have been under instruction for some time. It seems that when a man marries he undertakes certain social obligations to appear in society with his wife. Therefore I have studied dancing seriously for some time past; it is not without its value as an exercise."

She merely stared up to him with a species of horror and dismay. They reached Miss Atworthy and her mother; it was an intermission between dances, and stately Mrs. Atworthy led them about from group to group, managing the presentation gracefully, with just the right familiarity in introducing Jerrold Jarvice Jones—with just the right tinge of hesitation in naming Sylvia Ensor. She was proud of her work; she knew she was laying the corner-stone of Geraldine's social success.

And upon the ear of Sylvia Ensor fell names whose mention went like the sound of a bell from coast to coast and across the sea to England. The very first introductions were to a group of four laughing youths and girls who stood near; among them, they were heirs to half a billion.

The music began, and they started in the dance that swirled out from the sides of the room toward the center until the wide floor was covered with swaying couples.

He said: "We seem to be progressing favorably."

She looked up with the whimsical smile which began in her eyes long before it reached her lips. She spoke with long pauses.

"Jerry—"

"Yes?"

"A while ago I thought you were really waking up."

"Well?"

"But now I see that you were merely talking in your sleep."

He considered the reply, and she waited until he shook his head to acknowledge that the puzzle was beyond his solution.

"Do you call this dancing? Oh, you're doing the steps all right, but there's no

heart in you, Jerry. You've got the words, but you're singing flat—you haven't got the tune."

"I suppose you mean—"

"No, it isn't a thing to guess about. When you know, it'll hit you all in a bunch, like a tip for a sure thing, and you'll never dance the same afterward, and you'll never *be* the same afterward. Gee, Jerry, I'd like to be around when it happens."

"H-m," said Jones thoughtfully. "What would be the nature of the change, do you think?"

"That's the lingo I laughed at when I thought you were playing a part. Now I see it's a tragedy. Why, Jerry, you're dead from the eyes down. What will it be like when you come to life? Well, a caterpillar is only a fuzzy worm that crawls around; but he turns into a butterfly, Jerry, with gaudy wings, and flies as far in a minute as he could creep in a day. When you start, it'll be some flight."

"Look over there! There's three girls all maneuvering for position. They're coaxing their partners into starting a conversation with you as soon's this dance winds up in the hopes you'll ask 'em to dance the next one. What 'll they think when they find they're dancing with a statue?"

What they thought was not a mystery. The first one said to her next partner: "He just went through the movements of dancing, but he didn't even go through the movements of a conversation. Do you know what I found myself thinking? That he is just some mechanical monster which has to be wound up once a day."

And the second girl declared: "He dances very well—for such a big man. No, he didn't talk much; but then, you know, the silence of some men is more than the chatter of others."

But the third said to Geraldine Atworthy, who happened to be her confidential friend: "He's either a genius or a fool, my dear. No, he didn't do anything well except keep out of my way while we were dancing. But no one but a fool or a genius would bring a girl like that Miss Ensor to your house. Watch her!"

There had been some hesitation about



her among the men, for even in an actress hunting local color, her manner of speech was strange; but after St. Vincent-Lorry danced with her, and sat with her afterward, laughing and talking, the others declared for her outright. She was a novelty, and a novelty has only to be passed by the censor to become popular. She was beautiful; she danced with the most exquisite grace; and above all, she had been brought to the dance by the great unknown, J. J. Jones, of Broad Street. So the tide set toward her frankly, and wherever she moved there was a little following swirl of men. She was always a spot of bright color in a background of many dark forms.

And wherever that group passed they left a trail of laughter behind them, for Sylvia Ensor was blossoming with happiness. There was no strangeness; she was quite at home. After all, the Bohemian world is nearer akin to the upper region of fashion than that upper region is to the *bourgeoisie*. She found herself among people who were too sure of themselves and their places to be stiffly formal. They were frankly out for a good time, and they accepted Sylvia as she accepted them. Tomorrow there would be talk and judgment; to-night there was only merriment.

"If some one were to take that girl up," said the friend of Miss Atworthy, "she would become one of the powers that be. There's only one woman in the room who can hold a candle to her. Steve Harrison is making a perfect fool of himself about her."

"Who," asked Geraldine, "is the other woman?"

"Anne Manister. There she comes with Barry Dunbar."

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE AWAKENING.

"IT'S her surrender; she waited till she knew Jones was here before she came."

"Then it's true she's engaged to him?"

"Of course."

"But if she's here with Barry Dunbar, maybe it means a declaration of independence."

They were like captains of ships reading distant signals of battle. And as the two late arrivals approached, Geraldine murmured to her friend: "Look! Anne Manister is waking up; the chrysalis is broken."

For she came flushed, laughing, almost tremulous with some inner excitement. Barry Dunbar, overwhelmed, walked beside her like a man in a dream.

"Yes," said Geraldine, "it means war. I saw her face when she first glimpsed Jerrold Jones. This is better than a story. Let's get out of the way and watch."

They retreated to an obscure corner which commanded a long prospect of the ballroom, and there they watched. Their little exclamations told the story which would have passed unnoticed except to suspicious, practised eyes like theirs. Not a gesture, not a glance, escaped them; everything had its meaning.

"You're right. Anne Manister has waked up. She's going to fight for him."

"But do you think this Ensor girl has actually taken him away from Anne? Look at her now. She seems to pay no attention to him."

"That's because she's very wise. Besides, this fool or financier, whatever he is, is walking about in his usual dream. He hears nothing but the rustle of money; he wouldn't even know if they were fighting for him."

"But what if he were to wake up as Anne has done?"

"Ah, then there'd be something worth watching. Look! Anne wins the first stroke. She's dancing with him."

"And not saying a word."

"That's part of her game. Look at poor Barry Dunbar. He's worried, and you can trust the intuition of a man in love. And now that they've sat down Jones is talking."

"How he looks at her. You'd think he'd never seen her before."

"He hasn't—in the way she wanted him to. Look at those boys who linger in the offing. They've noticed something different in Anne, but they don't know how to break in while she's talking with a man like J. J. Jones, of Broad Street. He'd probably take

half a dozen of them and knock their heads together."

"But look at that group coming."

"It's this Ensor girl with her convoy of admirers, and she's steering them straight for Anne Manister. She's taken up the gauntlet, and now there'll be the battle royal."

"But she's not even looking at Jones."

"No, but she'll make him look at her."

"You're right. He *has* looked at her, and now he half turns to look again."

"Blood will tell. Anne Manister will win in the end."

"Maybe. I don't know. Yes, I guess you're right. There goes the music, and he stands up, facing Anne. Is he asking her to dance again?"

"No. See her smile die; and now he goes to Sylvia Ensor. She's won."

"But only the first step of the battle."

It was a waltz into which Jones and Sylvia swung as they started away from the group. The chains of self-restraint had been falling one by one from the mind of Jones. The wild adventure of the night, the transformation of Sylvia from a gay Bohemian of the streets to this creature of grace and beauty, the lights, the hum and stir of people, and, above all, the music—one by one these were the blows which struck away that restraint, and now there was a glow in his eye as if fire were being fanned there to an outbreak, and the stern lines about his mouth were relaxing rapidly. Youth, the tyrannous laughter of youth which he had denied himself, was overtaking him in a great wave.

A moment before the slender body of Anne Manister had swayed rhythmically in his arms, and the sheen and shimmer of her golden hair waved beneath his eyes. And he had said to himself, "Is this to be mine?" with a stupid wonder like a man who picks up a rock in the night and, carrying it into the day, finds that he holds a great nugget of the purest gold. Now it was blue-black hair beneath his eyes, and when he looked down it was to find parted lips which smiled faintly and a look which went dimly past him. It seemed that all the women of the world were gloriously beautiful; and he had closed his eyes upon

them! He glanced about the spacious room. In the flare of the lights, and because, perhaps, of a certain brilliant mist on his eyes, they *did* seem all marvelously fair.

And the music was gathering him away from his old self like a hand. He could not tell; was it the pulse of his blood or the rhythm of the waltz that went so fast? But every movement was a keen delight, and at his will this graceful, beautiful creature moved within his arms. No, she seemed to be eluding him—fleeing and taunting him on at once. He gathered her closer, and a murmur said at his ear: "Jerry dear, you are dancing wonderfully—yes, wonderfully."

The music stopped, and Jones knew it was his heart which had kept that quick-step. He was standing directly before her, staring down, and seeing her face against a blank. And all his life was a blank, and all the future was a blank. From the crowded slate of his mind all the words were washed and a new writing began.

"I am going to talk to you alone," he said.

She slipped her hand obediently under his arm, and they went through the long, bright halls together. The straightforward eyes of Jones saw only the green of the palm-room before them; but Sylvia Ensor was thrillingly aware of a hundred glances following them, and of a murmur that rose behind them. They had been a graceful pair together. That was the cause of the glances and of the hum, that and something more. She knew it as they entered the palm-room.

It was almost round, with a high-arched ceiling arabesqued until it gave an effect of Moorish luxury, heightened by the slender, tall palms which rose everywhere near the wall, and by shrubs and plants and blossoming flowers everywhere. With that vaulted ceiling so high above them; with the high, thin column of the fountain which splashed continually in the central pool; with the artificial breeze that rustled through the greenery—they seemed almost in an open garden. One might have looked up in an absent-minded moment and expected to see the stars. Close to that foun-



rain, they sat on an Italian bench of yellow marble, veined with blue.

And as they took their places and he turned toward her, Sylvia knew what that other thing was that had raised that murmur, brought those eyes upon them. The mist was gone from his eyes, and the spirit that had walked in him had taken to swift wings indeed. Fear came to Sylvia Ensor so that she shrank away a little. Had her hand loosed this direct, tense power? She was tremblingly aware of it as the piece of iron is aware of the magnet.

But Jones, leaning closer to her, was not aware that she shrank. He only heard the music of the orchestra beginning in the ballroom for the next dance, sweet, singing music, faint and far away; he only saw the flush go up the white, slender throat and burn in her cheeks; and with every breath he drew the fragrance of tall, pale roses standing in a green jade vase behind the bench. All his life, when a trace of that perfume reached him, he would think of her.

She said a little unevenly, and her voice was low: "What do you want to say to me, Jerry?"

The ponderous, careful speech was gone, and in its place was a clear, musical, deep voice, speaking words that came from the heart.

"Now that we're here, I know that I don't want to talk. I only want to look at you, Sylvia."

After a moment she raised a hand and sheltered her eyes behind it, but he caught it and drew it down.

"Sylvia, I have been starved all my life. I have never heard music before. I have never seen a woman. Do you believe that?"

"Yes."

"Isn't it strange? I have never even seen flowers, but now I know that they are like women, fragrant and delicate. Have you ever thought of that?"

"No."

It was like some almost physical force beating against her eyes, and she bowed her head.

"Look up to me."

She could not help but do as she was told.

"I want you to say something."

"I will try."

"It is this: say that you are glad to be with me here."

"I am glad to be with you here."

"No, no, not mechanically like that, Sylvia. Say it as if you had discovered it for yourself, and as if you wanted no other man or woman to be near you now."

"But I can't think, Jerry, when you are so close to me."

"Neither can I, Sylvia. But do what I do. Listen to the music—it will put words into your head that you'd never think of otherwise; and listen to the fall of the fountain, and breathe the air deep with the scent of the flowers in it. Now tell me."

"I cannot."

"Why? Is it hard for you to like me, Sylvia? Had you rather be back with the crowd? I am happier here; but being so near to you, I feel as if I owned that music, and it were speaking for me, and as if the rustling of the leaves over us were whispering for me."

"It is speaking; but don't you see that I cannot listen because the Society of the Cross owns me, Jerry, and nothing else in the world can have a claim on me?"

"You've taken some oath?"

"Yes."

He made a movement with those big, strong hands.

"Then I'll break it."

There was a tinkle of metal on the floor, and when he looked down he found a little cross of iron which had been thrown at his feet.

He raised it, and found it was like the model of that cross which had been taken from Trouvain, save that that was gold and this was iron, but the same small dagger was lashed to one side of the cross.

When he looked up, Sylvia had risen, and now she moved back toward the entrance of the ballroom, with her eyes horror-widened and fixed upon the cross.

He stood up, and would have followed her.

"Keep away!" she cried, and her voice was high and thin with fear. "It fell at your feet, not mine! It fell at your feet!"

And she ran through the door and into the room beyond.

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### THE IRON CROSS.

HE did not wait to find what hand had tossed the trinket to him, but followed her out through the bright rooms. Yet she was gone before he reached the reception-hall, and in the street he found that his taxicab had left.

He stood on the pavement for a moment and watched the stream of automobiles purring past. On with that stream and somewhere into the heart of night she had passed and left him, he felt, forever. Those lights of the street which had glowed so softly yellow when they were coming toward the dance were now white and cold, and looked like cynical eyes toward him.

He remembered what old Henry Sterns had said: "Every other man is searching for something which he will never find; is trying for a goal which is just beyond the tips of his fingers. You desire strength, and that you have. They desire happiness, and that no man has ever had."

He understood now, for the city of night had taken him into its midst. He was one of the crowd; the yearning to be in the midst of peopled places was upon him even then. He wanted voices about him. He wanted the contact with hands and shoulders. He wanted to hear laughter and shouts and murmurs. The discipline to which he had schooled himself for all those years was gone, swept away in half a night which left him a mere dream of happiness unrealized and for a token of it, the iron cross which was hard and cold in his hand.

The desire for the crowd was gone. In its place was only a hungry yearning for one voice, one hand, one pair of gleaming eyes. The thought of her companioned him on his way home. He walked, for the long, swift strides gave some vent to his uneasy loneliness, but as he walked she seemed to keep step beside him, seeing and enjoying all that she passed, humming a tune, and inviting him into her happiness with a sidelong glance now and again.

He passed a newsboy shouting an extra with a shrill, crowing voice. That gay spirit beside him turned and laughed back at the child, and tossed him a coin, but Jones drew the collar of his coat higher about his face, and bowed his head and made forward grimly.

He was glad when he reached his house door, for when he closed it, it seemed as if he shut the thought of her away. But a moment later, in passing down the hall, he caught the glimmer of the tall mirror before which she had danced. A pain came in the heart of Jones, a poison point of pain that came and went and came again with a steady ache.

In his bedroom he kindled a fire on the hearth and laid big logs across the andirons, for he knew that he would sleep none that night. A childish fancy came to him that she was no more a part of reality than some dream of the night, and that with the coming of day all thought of her would vanish. So he went to the window and looked out. There was no sign of dawn. Out of a coal-black sky the winter stars looked down with a frosty glitter, and down the street he saw the lights of the town where others were chasing some dream of happiness as he had done and would gain from it, as he had gained, only the cross of iron.

So he went back and stared grimly into the fire which now leaped high. He turned out the lights, and there was only the spring and flare of the yellow flames. Then he began to rehearse his life slowly and carefully, summing his achievements one by one, and adding the sum total with pitiless accuracy. On one side he found dollars in millions; on the other, which should have balanced the account with friends, and all the memories of a jovial past and all the sure happiness of a home, there was only a question mark—only this one night of adventure, hope, illusion, and the cross of iron.

He smiled unpleasantly into the swirl of flames and then straightened a little in his chair, for he thought he heard a sound at his window.

But he relaxed again immediately, and shook his head at the wild hope which had sprung up in him. No sound was ever



heard in that house of his—that enlarged coffin, as Sylvia had called it. Once more, and this time he could not be mistaken! He turned in his chair, and found her standing by the window, and looking at him with grave, sad eyes.

Or what seemed to be her, but he was so shaken that he dared not trust his eyes. He rose from the chair and advanced toward her with his great hands stretched out before him, like one who gropes through the blackest night. His fingers touched warm flesh; he framed her face between his hands, and he looked down into the familiar, restless glimmer of those dark eyes.

"Jerry," she said, "you look as if you'd seen a ghost—as if I were the ghost. Why, you're all white!"

"Come," he said, and walked behind her, to cut off all retreat, until he had her safely in the chair before the fire, the wide chair that held her in as if with arms. Then he dragged a foot-bench near and sat down on it. His eyes never once left her face, as though he feared that if he turned his head she would disappear as suddenly as she had come.

"Aren't you going to ask how I came in?"

"No."

"Up the fire-escape, Jerry. It's easy if you know how to get to the first landing."

For answer he leaned toward her and let his hand trail softly across the outline of her face, like a blind man who reads by touch. She caught that hand down and stared at him with breathless surprise.

"Do you care so much?"

He said simply: "My dear, I love you."

A flash that might have been eagerness brightened her eyes and then died away.

"I'm only a vagabond; I'm only a girl of the streets. Do you know that?"

He smiled.

"But you don't wholly understand. There's no mystery about me, Jerry dear. There's no cause or reason for my being in the world. I just happened into it. And you've seen the people I've grown up amongst. And you know that I'm bound for life or death to the Society of the Cross."

"I will take what you cannot give to them. There's no music and no flowers to help me talk to you now, so I won't try to talk, but now that I have you, I won't let you go."

She closed her eyes a moment and breathed deeply, but when her eyes opened again they were hard and bright.

"Jerry, we must not dream. I've come here to warn you and for nothing else. Do you know what the cross they gave you means?"

"Yes. They are on my trail."

"Don't smile. You are strong, but you aren't strong enough for them. They reach everywhere. But you saw for yourself. Their hand came even into that ballroom. Yes, one of those fine gentlemen or one of those beautiful girls belongs to them, body and soul, and gave their message to you. There are other warnings and other messages which they send, but this one has only one meaning—death!"

She paused, but he watched her without emotion, and her eyes expressed wonder.

"Are you hearing me, Jerry? Don't look at me like that, but listen. If you start now—to-night—this very moment, you may escape them. You must escape. After all they are only human. Take a ship that will carry you far away to the South Seas. Change your name; grow a beard—anything to disguise yourself."

She had risen in her excitement, but now he only shook his head.

She said angrily: "Are you thinking of the police? Bah! They will help you no more than so many images of clay. You have killed a man in the society. When you turned and threw that door among them it struck Carver on the forehead and he died instantly. I saw his body. After that they will never leave your trail. I knew it when I saw the iron cross, and the terror of it caught me by the throat, Jerry, so that I could only remember that if I were caught with you I would be subject to the same death. Even now, you see, if I am found here I will get the warning which they've already given you."

She covered her face, shuddering.

"But all I've said to you, Sylvia. Are you going to answer it?"

"I'm strong enough not to think of it. But I'm late; it will be morning soon; I'm expected. Before I go; Jerry, you're a man!"

And she slipped inside his arms and surrendered to him her upraised face. He merely looked down into her eyes and smiled, and his arms made no move to hold her.

"Do you think I will let you go like this, Sylvia?"

She stepped back, the flush dying slowly from her face.

"You don't mean—"

"I lost you once before and I was in hell. You've come and taken me out. Do you imagine I'll let you go again?"

She seemed to weaken—to lean toward him; but she gathered her strength with a quick effort.

"I'm going to that window and out the fire-escape. Stand out of the way, Jerry."

There was not a change in his face or his position. Her voice came colder, slower, with a little metallic ring in it.

"I'm done for if I stay here. You know that. It's you or me, and I'm not ready to pass out. Stand away!"

She drew her automatic, and advanced a pace.

"I've warned you twice. For the last time: will you let me go?"

His head tilted back with a fierce exultation in her.

"I'm going to take that gun away from you, Sylvia, and I'm going to take you in my arms and kiss your lips till they tell me you love me, because I know that somewhere down in your heart you have those words to say to me."

She shrank away before his coming, and the gun rose till it covered his breast, but he cared neither for it nor the purposeful, bright black eyes behind the gun. He brushed it away as if it had been a toy in the hands of a child and caught her in his arms.

She made no struggle. It seemed as if the strength had gone utterly from her; only her head was bowed in weak protest till he called to her, and then her face tilted up by slow degrees. He kissed her forehead and a sharp flush went up her face;

her eyes and the lids closed; her lips, and they curved to a marvelous smile.

"Now tell me," he commanded.

"I love you."

"Again."

"I love you."

"Again."

But she clung to him, crying: "Oh, Jerry, with all my heart."

And while the ring of her voice still held there was a metallic click against the floor at their feet. They turned in time to see a grinning, baboonlike face vanish from the window. She stooped and raised a cross of iron in her hand, and the two stared at each other silently. The terror she had shown at the house of Atworthy was nothing to him compared with this dumb despair, and then a miserable guilt came upon him.

He said: "Is it too late for you?"

She nodded: "It is too late. The society never changes. Carver is dead, and they know very well that I have betrayed them. You might escape, but two of us never could."

She caught her hands to her eyes and pressed hard, as if to rub some thought away. When she looked at him again the life had come back to her.

"What does it matter, after all? Jerry, I've always wished that I could be wholly happy just once—and then die. And now I shall be. I'm not afraid; are you?"

He smiled.

"Sylvia, I'm not even sorry that I kept you here when you were free to go and escape this. Listen; we will crowd a whole life into a moment. I know that it can be done. Already I've lived longer to-night than in all the other years of my life. But this night shall not be the last. I've escaped from your committee once, and I shall do it again and again until I catch them at last and trim their claws; and while I'm doing it I'll keep you as safe as a jewel in a casket, Sylvia. Will you trust me?"

"Dear Jerry."

"And forgive me?"

She brooded upon him with an infinite tenderness.

"You shall stay guarded in this house."

"There'll be a terrible scandal."



"My servants are silent as stones."

"Even stones repeat scandal. And we can't live in one house forever. Think of sitting inside and hearing the autos go by after dark taking people into the night, and all the adventure."

She looked at him with dismay, and then added with one of her quick changes: "But I don't care; I'm too tired to care. I just want to sit here and watch you, Jerry, and go to sleep."

"And you're happy, dear?"

"So happy!"

"And in the morning we'll plan a wonderful life together, Sylvia, with everything in it that I've left out of mine."

"Yes—in the morning."

She twisted into a more comfortable position in the chair which she had taken.

"It seems the most wonderful thing in the world just to sit here and watch you—Jerry—and go to sleep—and be loved—even while I sleep."

Now that she surrendered to it, the weariness of that wild night seemed to take her at a leap. Her eyelids flickered to a close; opened to look at him again; and then she slept. For a moment he watched her, and then he walked to the window and looked down upon the street.

It was almost empty, but not quite, for here and there at long intervals moved the light of an automobile, and the river of the life of night still ran, though faint and low. In fact, it was not real light, but the beginning of dawn, a rapidly spreading gray light. And a queer fancy came to Jones with the thought that at the beginning of the day she had so suddenly grown weak and surrendered to her weariness.

He went back to her hurriedly. She still slept soundly, the long, black lashes sweeping down against her cheek, and one small hand lay palm up on the arm of the chair. He placed a finger against the palm. Instantly the hand curled about it and she smiled in sleep. The heart of Jones leaped within him. Then he stooped and raised her in his arms with infinite pains.

She stirred and murmured, half awakened: "Jerry—safe?"

"Safe."

And she slept again, while he carried

her out to a guest-room and covered her up in the bed. Then, with a stealthy step, he left her. It was clear day before he stretched himself out in his own bed.

Into his dream came the harsh moaning of a hurdy-gurdy. He wakened, and the bright sun was slanting into his room. He closed his eyes again and listened once more to the street organ. This was the music of day, and there was still beating in him the rhythm of the dance and the light, sweet harmony of the orchestra. That was the music of night. Then he caught a quick tap at his door.

"Well?" he called.

"It is I."

He was out of bed and at the door with a bound.

"Let me throw on a bathrobe and I'll open the door, Sylvia."

"You can't open it. It's locked from the outside and I have the key."

He was dumb.

She went on: "I woke with the sun against my face and got up. From the window I looked down to the street, and there I saw what I had expected—a sentinel from the committee. But this sentinel was Trouvain."

"Sylvia, let me out, and I'll go down to him."

"No."

He wrenched furiously at the door, but this was a ponderous slab of oak, and the bronze hinges would have withstood a giant.

"He saw me, and signaled in our code. This is what he said: 'We need you. Come back to us. It will save you and it will save the man.'"

"That meant me?"

"Yes. And I'm going back."

"I'll never let you."

"You can't help it. The door is locked. Jerry, it all happened in the night. Now that the sun is shining you'll forget."

"Sylvia, listen to me."

A sob came in her voice, and she was fighting against it while she answered: "I don't dare to listen, Jerry. I'm going down to him, and I'm going far away with him."

"Let me out for one instant, Sylvia; let

me see you once more and I'll let you go without a single protest. I swear I will."

"No. You are strong enough to break your oaths. Now I'm on tiptoe, Jerry, and I've kissed the door just level with your lips. Oh, my dear, good-by."

And then he heard the quick patter of her feet down the hall.

From the street below the hurdy-gurdy struck into a fresh tune; a newsboy wailed an extra from the distance. In the sudden stupor of his mind he went to his clothes and reached in a pocket for his watch. What he brought out in the hollow of his hand was an iron cross.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### WHAT CAN'T BE BOUGHT.

IT was a full half-hour before Jones was able to leave the room. Once out of it he ordered his car and went down to it without noticing a peculiar and unprecedented warmth in the voice of the butler when the servant said: "Good morning."

That morning and evening drive in the automobile was almost his only waste of time. It would have been much quicker to take the subway down, but Jones had one mania, and that was speed—speed on land or water.

The only reason that he kept a chauffeur was that when he drove his own car he was almost always stopped for breaking the speed limit. So he had secured a man who had what is known among chauffeurs as "driving luck"; that is to say, he was able to keep well above the limit all the time and yet never be arrested; and the ease with which the fellow picked his way through a crowded street was one of Jones's rare pleasures. This morning, however, he had not a thought for the brisk motion of the car.

He was happy, but it was not the happiness of the speeder. It was something which rose from the heart and overflowed in a steady smile which had no cause, no reason. It was merely the joy of the man who says to himself: "I have lived."

And Jones, leaning back on the cushion, looked out upon the world and found it

good. Everywhere was motion, and everywhere were faces. He had closed his senses to them before. Now they struck upon him with a vivid freshness. The happiness which was like a light within him was reflected by them. It shone back upon him and heartened him. The cold air nipped their cheeks and made them rosy, and every one on the sidewalks was ducking his head to the wind and laughing to some companion. The whole world rejoiced, and Jones with it.

Withal, there was a certain poignant sadness, a hurt which lay at his heart with the thought of Sylvia and brought to his eyes now and then a mist that was not altogether the effect of the wind.

Not that he resigned her as lost. No, he felt her nearness as vitally as if she were sitting on the seat beside him. He had only to stare straight ahead of him—and there she was with the wind whipping a lock of her hair about her cheek, and her eyes glancing up at him with a joyous radiance.

So that when he stepped from the car in front of the Broad Street office building, he paused and looked back to his chauffeur. He went back to his car.

"Yes, sir?" asked Norton, vaguely astonished by this proceeding and by a peculiar uneasiness in the face of the master.

"It seems to me," said Jones, "that you've been working devilish steadily for me, Norton."

"Yes, sir?"

"Don't you want to get away from the work sometimes? Don't you want to get away from the work and get out among it?"

"Among what?"

"Why, man, all of this. Don't you understand?"

He waved his hand up and down at the bustle of the noisy street.

Then he checked himself and added: "I appreciate your faithfulness, Norton, and I'll see what can be arranged about giving you a vacation, eh?"

Norton blinked, looked again, and found that he was not dreaming.

"A vacation and full pay, eh? And here's an earnest of it."



He picked a bill from his wallet and slipped it into the hand of his driver. When he had entered the building, Norton looked down in dumb amaze. It was a bill of fifty dollars. The heart of Norton leaped up; he, too, rejoiced in the morning and the crowd. No cold in the air could chill the warmth that was within him.

Half a dozen of Tankerton's assistants were in the waiting-room when Jones entered. He gave them a cheerful good morning and passed on; how could he guess the consternation that reigned the moment he closed the door behind him? How could he guess how they gathered together and verified the miracle until one of them said: "What he pulled off yesterday was enough to make even J. J. Jones happy. Every bit of that South Union went at a hundred and eight."

This convinced them, but only partially; there was too much life in that cheery greeting to come all from the joy of money-making. In the mean time Jones entered the office of Isaac Tankerton.

A stately, middle-aged woman, beautifully dressed, and with a rich set of furs on the chair beside her, was leaning toward the little man, making a last appeal, and as Jones came in the emotionless voice of Tankerton answered: "It is my business, *madame*, to think of all the arguments which you have just advanced. Your husband's firm is old, it is true, and its reputation is excellent. But shall I take his wife's word that if we carry him through this crisis he will reform—he will regain his grip? *Madame*, the very fact that he has allowed you to come here to plead for him shows that he has lost that grip—forever."

The little pause before that last word and the utter lack of emphasis made it more terrible than the bitterest denunciation. The woman started to speak again, stopped at a sob, and rising hastily, threw her furs about her neck while Tankerton allowed his eyes to glance politely past her. As she turned she faced Jones and flushed.

She said to Tankerton with infinite disdain: "I thought I was to speak alone with you?"

The heart of Jones swelled, seeing her stately pride. He went forward with a

smile. "*Madame*, I am very glad that I have played the eavesdropper even without intention. I am a member of the firm. My name is Jones."

"J. J. Jones," said Tankerton dryly; but his all-seeing, quiet eyes were fixed upon that smile. "This is Mrs. Taner."

She winced, hearing that name, and the straw at which she had grasped when he approached her with that cheerful greeting turned to air.

Yet she managed to smile faintly in response, saying: "I am glad to know you, Mr. Jones. Good day, Mr. Tankerton."

"Wait," said Jones, "I have a little more faith in human nature than Tankerton has. He refuses to carry you through the crisis because he has lost a little faith in Mr. Taner. But possibly you haven't thought of one thing, Tankerton, which is to make your advance to Mrs. Taner herself and hold her responsible."

Tankerton gaped upon him, recovering himself only with a great effort.

"I have never handled business," said Mrs. Taner with a shaken voice, "but—"

"But an efficient manager can handle it for you," said Jones kindly, "and I am sure that after what has lately happened your husband will be glad to retire from business and let your manager run the place for him."

"He would do anything!"

"Then," said Jones, "if you will secure his consent in writing the matter is settled."

"If Mr. Tankerton consents," she said timidly.

"I am sure that he will," said Jones.

A single glance from the old man to the young told her the astonishing truth. The rumors on the street which said that Jones headed the firm—*was* the firm—were not so many idle whispers. Tankerton was looking down at his desk.

"I suppose," he said, "that I will."

She turned to Jones and gave him both her hands.

"God bless you," she said.

"My dear lady," he said, and his smile grew infinitely gentle, "if you ask Him I am sure He will."

And he led her to the door. She could not speak again.

When he turned back into the room he found that the incredulous eyes of Tankerton followed him just as the eyes of Norton had followed him after the gift of money.

"You are poorer," said Tankerton, "by fifty thousand dollars."

"And the richer, my friend, by the first 'God bless you' that has ever been spoken to me."

"If you bring God to Broad Street I have naturally nothing more to say."

Jones went to the desk and dropped his big hands, palm down, upon it.

"Tankerton, are you happy?"

"I am not discontented."

"Happiness, Tankerton, is not the absence of pain. It's a positive quality."

"May I ask when you discovered that?"

"At 6.54 P.M., yesterday."

"It is rare to find a happy man who is so accurate."

"Tut, Isaac. Come here with me."

He led the little man to the window; he pointed down to the people stirring blackly on the pavement below.

"Think of it, Tankerton, you are as much greater than most of those people as you are now higher above them; but I wonder if most of them aren't a damned sight happier."

"One big scoop such as you worked yesterday sometimes affects a man as it seems to have affected you; but I thought you were exempt from such weaknesses—such hysteria, Mr. Jones."

"The devil you did! Well, I'm not, Isaac. Did you notice the people as you were coming down to the office this morning?"

"I generally try to keep myself away from the crowd."

"A great mistake. They are swine when you look at them from a distance; just a herd of nosing swine; but when you look at them closely enough to recognize faces you see something more. This morning I saw happiness in them, the sort of happiness you can't buy—the sort of happiness you can't get from all your pictures and your rugs, Tankerton."

"Why, man, when you lean out and look down at that street, doesn't something like

perfume strike up to you, the thousand pleasures of the crowd that you can't measure or define? Tankerton, most of us are too busy with purposes. We don't discover that the greatest thing has no purpose at all, but it is the most wonderful thing in the world—the mere joy of being alive. Look out at them—don't take my word for it—look down at them! The air is electric with the joy of five million people, Tankerton, every one of them glad that they are in this world."

But Tankerton turned and walked moodily back to his desk.

Then he said: "There is something about you, Jones, that stirs me a little more deeply and a little more sadly than I've ever been stirred before. Just now I wish that I were young again, and had the last thirty years to live over."

"Thirty years? Man, you can live a whole century in a minute, and the way to do it is to remember all the time that you are made for the world and not the world for you."

Every word was like a blow to the little man, and now he looked up to Jones with a great sigh, and then his eyes went past Jones into an infinite distance. The younger man went quietly from the room and passed on to his own office.

There he bent his mind on the thousand questions which poured in upon him, as usual, through the telephone. He answered them as rapidly as they were asked. It seemed to him, that wonderful morning, as if the veil were ripped from before the faces of the God of high finance, and that he could sit there and look into the very heart of the street. All was known to him. He had merely to answer words that formed of their own volition.

## CHAPTER XV.

EXPLAINING J. J. JONES OF BROAD STREET.

THE result was that he had finished the planning of a whole little campaign in the space of an hour. Then, instead of sitting there and coldly plotting out the possibilities of the future as he had done for so many days before, he got up



and commenced to walk the room hastily. Habit still held him there, but it fought against a growing desire to escape from those four confining walls.

He tried to discover what it was that made him so continually uneasy. Partly it was the thought of Sylvia, he discovered, and out of that thought grew another. He rang up John Manister, and told him that he was coming over for an important conversation. Then he slipped into his overcoat.

At the same time the door opened, and Tankerton entered and held out his hand.

He said: "I've come to thank you, Jones. I have spent my time in preparation for a great day coming, and now I see that if you hadn't warned me I might have been too old when the day finally arrived. I have been making a beautiful casket to put the jewel of some fine work, and now I see that I have the casket finished; but I haven't the jewel. I'm going to start out to find it."

"Heart of oak!" cried Jones cheerfully. "Why, Isaac, your body may be a bit past the prime, but your mind's young as a boy's—a boy with a fine-tempered brain. Good-by. I'm done for the day, I think."

He would not use the car to go to the office of Manister, for it occurred to him that there was a pleasure in walking—a pleasure that had nothing to do even with the value of the exercise. Sylvia had taught him that.

Doors opened readily before him at the office of Anne's father, and presently he stood in the inner sanctum shaking hands with Manister. He broached his business immediately.

"I've come to call off our deal, Manister, if you have no objections."

"You mean—"

"About Anne. It would be a big thing to roll our strength together and then hit the Street with it. There are certain things that we could do together that I cannot do alone; but after all it isn't worth the game."

Manister sat down as suddenly as he had risen when Jones was announced.

"What the devil!" he broke out. "Look here, Jones, what do you mean by all this?"

"She doesn't care that for me," said Jones amiably, "and here's Barry Dunbar, a fine fellow, eating his heart out for her. Let him have her, Manister."

The older man said warmly: "You have the wrong idea entirely, Jerrold. As a matter of fact I don't think Anne was particularly enthusiastic about our plan at first, but the last day or so—why, she's changed most astonishingly. And come to look at you, you've changed a devilish lot yourself, my boy."

He glanced over the bright, gleaming eyes and the flushed face of Jones. A lifetime of pleasant ease would never quite smooth away the rocklike lines of nose and chin, and the hard, straight lines beside the mouth; but yet there was a change of spirit which shone through the mask of the face.

"In fact," he went on, "this morning at breakfast she spoke of you—"

"And as for me," broke in Jones, far from catching the drift of Manister, "I quite agree that the best thing is to break it off."

"Jerrold—"

"You see, I don't love her, and for the first time it has occurred to me that love ought to play a part in an affair like this."

Manister laughed nervously.

"I can stand the business disappointment, though it's a pretty hard blow, but—"

He seemed oddly embarrassed.

"Well?"

"Jones, before you take any further steps I wish you'd go out and talk this over with Anne. She'd be interested, you know."

"Talk with Anne? By Jove, Manister, the very thing! I've been wondering what I'd do with the rest of the morning."

He reached for the telephone.

"Wait a minute," interposed Manister hastily, "you don't need to waste time ringing her up. I'll do it for you and tell her you'll be due out there in a quarter of an hour."

# The Limping Tiger

By Herman  
Howard Matteson



THIS was Chandrath Singh, a high-caste Hindu, called after the manner of the Brahman, "a twice-born." Formerly his breast had been broad and flat, and had supported many glittering medals won in war's emprise. Now his body was as distorted and misshapen as that of the grotesque manikins sold upon the streets of Calcutta and Bombay by *jakirs*. The "Tiger of Benares," he had been named.

Though the tiger now limped and halted, he was a tiger still.

A tangle of twisted arms and legs, he sat huddled upon the earth before the low opening of his cedar hut like some great, black spider resting before its nest. His beard, thick and long, that had never known the touch of steel, was as black as the turban which bound about upon his head the high-piled mane of unshorn hair. His eyes, deep-set, glared forth unwinkingly into the gathering darkness.

Footsteps came shuffling through the thick carpet of fir-needles which covered the earth. A tall Hindu, laboring under an immense burden, came into the open. Advancing, he deposited a square box upon the ground, spread his arms, and stood silent, the ceremonious greeting of one high-caste Hindu to another.

"Benath," spoke the deep, rumbling voice of the cripple, "welcome. Sit here with the wreck of your kinsman."

Benath squatted cross-legged upon the gray blanket. "I received your word, Chan-

drath Singh," said Benath, "the last day of the month, Varsha. It is now the last day of the month, Sarad. A long way it is from Benares to British Columbia, Chandrath, but I came promptly, bringing what you require. Though the journey had been thrice as long, to take it in your behalf were a trifle."

The limping tiger nodded his head. "Thank you, Benath. You brought everything—the steel dagger, *khanda*, the iron comb, *khanga*, the lead bottle of *gugule*, and—the other, Ganese, our little god of wisdom and of justice?"

"Everything, Chandrath, everything."

"The dagger, the comb—"

"As you directed, Chandrath Singh, they were fashioned by the hands of a Sudra, an outcast. Never have they graced the head of a twice-born. In linen, twice washed in water of the Ganges, they are wrapped. Without defilement, Chandrath Singh may pass them on to this upstart, Mahar Vanda, who, you wrote, is a Kammalan, of the caste of a swineherd, but rich in foreign gold."

At mention of the name, Mahar Vanda, the eyes of the limping tiger glowed like match-heads rubbed between thumb and finger.

"Yes, a Kammalan, the caste of a swineherd, Mahar Vanda, but with gold, power. In our Barna country, one would call a Nayar, have this Vanda whipped to death with five strands of riveted elephant hide. But here, British Columbia, Canada, Amer-



ica, he is rich, and that spells station and power."

The tiger lowered his head for a thoughtful moment. "You brought all, Benath, the *khanda*, the *khanga*, the vial of precious *gugule*, and the other, Ganese, god of wisdom and of justice?"

"All, Chandrath Singh; as you bade me."

"This swineherder, Mahar Vanda, would ape his masters. Think, Benath, in his pig bristles of hair he would wear the steel dagger of a Brahman, the iron comb of the warrior caste; he would wrap his carcass in a white, Sari robe. Even now, Benath, the holy *janeo*, the sacred, symbolic cord of a soldier, he wears about his toad of a neck—a Sudra, lowest of the Sudras, a Kam-malan."

Benath lifted his hand, felt the press of the *khanda* and the *khanga* beneath his own turban. The misshapen breast of Chandrath Singh heaved convulsively.

Chandrath hitched himself forward, then continued: "Day after day he comes here asking me does a twice-born Brahman do thus or so. Throughout the entire Grishma, month of wet weather, daily he came maundering, seeking to muster his buzzard courage to ask of me my *khanda*, and my *khanga* to wear beneath his greasy turban. *My khanga! My khanda!* It is no boast, Benath, but my *khanga* and *khanga* have suffered never a taint but the honest tarnish of the smoke of gun-fire. *My khanda!* The outcast pig!

"But I humored him. I had my reasons as presently you shall see. I told him that to part with *khanga* or *khanda* during life were a profanation which the flames of seven hells could absolve. Cunningly I lied to him, as one should to these lickers of grease. I would get for him, I said, the sacred steels that had rested beneath the turban of a mighty one gone to bliss through the battle flames.

"With joy, he grunted, squealed; offered a grateful kiss to this misshapen hand. I had rather a dog had licked it."

The tiger held up the twisted fingers of his right hand. "I had rather a dog had licked it."

Benath leaned forward, took the misshapen, withered hand into his own broad

palm. "Ah, kinsman, once that was a hand! Do you recall, Chandrath, how once you made souvenirs for the British ladies by twisting double in those fingers a golden guinea? Unless the story is too painful, tell me what broke this tiger's back and pulled his claws."

"Gold, Benath, that once I twisted into playthings for the ladies—the lack of it. Here, among these white folk, birth, caste, blood are nothing; only gold. And I had none of it.

"Could I sully the name of Singh to beg? There were none of my caste about to aid me. All had gone to the white brother's war, whither, as soon as I could have outfitted myself in a manner becoming my station, I, too, should have gone. Rather than beg or steal, I came to toil in this logging camp of the swineherder, Mahar Vanda. How these twisted fingers that once were tiger's claws itched to be at the greasy throat of him as he stood appraising me as if I had been a beef in the market-place.

"He gave me work to do in the bunkhouse where the laborers sleep, assigned me the foulest, darkest corner. The first meal, the cook, a yellow fool from Hainan, heaped high my plate with stinking flesh of pig, and then laughed his cackle laugh, with the shouting of the Sudras, when I struck it to the floor. Me, a Singh, making sport for the rabble like a mountebank by the roadside.

"The morning of the third day, walking to my labor through the wood, Mahar Vanda came beside me, linked his hand of a Sudra through my arm. The hand of a Sudra touching the arm of a twice-born—I struck him down! For the indignity of that touch upon my flesh, even though through cloth of wool, I walked the whispering wood three days and nights.

"Then back to my work. His beast face bound about with cloth where a stick had wounded him when I threw him to the earth, Mahar Vanda came to me to say that I should attend the following morning for a new task. Hook man I was to be, as they call it, my duty to stretch the long, steel cable, make it fast about the mammoth fir-logs that they pile into heaps beside the skid road.

"That morning, when the whistle sounded, I took my place and made fast the cable about a great log. The engine made its snorting noise. The drum began to wind. The cable tautened. Snap! With the strength of a thousand pythons, that steel serpent wound itself round and about me, tore me, broke me, dumped my quivering carcass upon the earth. My legs and arms were broken, my breast caved in. As the merciful dark came down about me, I turned my eyes. That cable had been filed—filed half-way through.

"A week I lay unconscious. For a month, in agony, helpless I lay. Mahar Vanda had built this little hut for me, and here, the sixth week, they dumped me like offal from the camp."

Benath reached impulsively, laid his hand upon the twisted shoulder. "Here—alone—this hovel, the broken tiger."

"Alone, yes, save once a day when the yellow heathen from Hainan brings me food. Alone, save—"

The black, scowling features softened. "Alone save when they come, and my grace to Krishna, that has been nearly every day, they, the rajah, the white man, Munro Ross, and one fit to be ranee to a king of kings, the girl called Hunil Earles."

Chandrath Singh rubbed his wasted hands. "Yes, they came. 'How is our tiger man to-day?' would say the Rajah Ross, shaking this hand. The ranee, too, would shake my hand, say she had brought something for her tiger, unwrap a snow-white cloth which covered food that could defile no Brahman's lips."

The tiger ceased speaking, folded his arms with a trace of pride. "The Rajah Ross and his ranee that was to have been."

Again the look of implacable hatred settled upon his face. "Every day nearly, also came the swineherd, Mahar Vanda. In his loutish way he would conjure me to tell him of the courtesies that grace a twice-born. Did a Brahman gentleman wear his nails short or long? What sort of boots did a Brahman wear, what linen, gloves?"

Chandrath laughed harshly. "I would fill the fool full of fantastic lies. Why not? Touching the matter of what perfume a gentleman should affect, I told him—what

do you suppose, Benath—I told him that a Brahman twice a day touched his hair and his turban cloth with drops of *gugule*, the incense oil of the third secret rite of our worship! *Gugule! Benath, gugule!*"

The tiger man's snarling laugh rang through the silent wood.

Benath suddenly leaned toward his kinsman. "*Gugule*, Chandrath; you told him *gugule*? Ah! now, I understand. *Gugule*—and Ganese, the little god of wisdom and justice. Admirable, my brother; most admirable."

At the praise of Benath, the features of the limping tiger assumed an expression almost childish in their pleasure and satisfaction. "Thank you, Benath. Yes, *gugule*—for the turban of the lord-high swineherd—and Ganese, our little god of wisdom and of justice. Thank you, Benath, thou faithful.

"But I must tell on. The hour grows late, and you have journeyed far. For a fortnight came neither the Rajah Ross, nor the ranee. How lonesome, void this wide wood seemed! Then came alone the ranee. Her eyes were red, her face pale. She had been weeping. As a timbrel attuned sounds when another is struck, I felt, I knew—the Rajah Ross had gone overseas to the war. How I envied him.

"As brokenly she told the simple tale, I caught here and there, from a sigh, a trembling of her sweet lips, hints of further and deeper griefs that she spoke not of. Gently I urged her if her heart were heavy to tell me all.

"In such a paroxysm of weeping as would melt the stone heart of a *davata* devil image, she told me. Her father, what they call a remittance man, had had his allowance cut off from England by the war. Money, somehow money he must have for he had that vile habit of the heathen yellow men, and of some Hindus, of smoking the brown juice of the poppy. Money he must have. He had got it—from Mahar Vanda. She feared Mahar Vanda, she said, weeping, quivering.

"I comforted, counseled her. I strove to strengthen the quality of her courage. I bade her bring me the word if the Sudra pig offered her any insolence. Sobbing, her



faithful face clasped in her white hands, she went away through the forest.

"Again she came, and again. Her heart was heavy, freighted with portentous words that her maiden lips could not bring themselves to utter.

"Also the Mahar Vanda Singh honored me. I had given him some scant drops of the *gugule* essence. In vain he had sought for more of the fluid in the white man's towns. Among us it is known, Benath, that in no apothecary-shop of the world may the sacred *gugule* be bartered. In truth, I told Mahar that I had no more of the essence, but was expecting some from a kinsman of Benares, that the half should be his.

"This very morning, Benath, to share the burden she could no longer support, the Ranee Hunil told me all. Her father, as surety for the money borrowed, had pledged her in marriage after the Hindu rite to Mahar Vanda. No marriage of the white man's ceremony was Mahar to claim until the passing of the season of heavy dews that we call Sisira. Sobbing, her frail shoulders quivering, she clasped the ivory frame of her fingers about her beautiful face. As part of the bargain, she related she was to go away to school, at Vanda's charge, on the first day of the month Hamareta she is to go.

"The month of Hamareta draws on apace, my kinsman.

"The Ranee Hunil had no more than disappeared through the wood when there passed a Sudra wood-chopper called Bhim. I summoned him. Before his eyes I unwrapped this turban from about my head, held forth the sacred *khanda* and *khanga*, and bade him swear. Tremblingly, he swore. 'Discover secretly,' I ordered the Sudra, 'bring to me secretly the design of the pig, Mahar Vanda, touching the going away of the Ranee Hunil Earles.'

"An hour Bhim was gone. Returning, he gave me the word. 'The Ranee Hunil is destined to go to school,' said Bhim, 'to a school whence she will never return save into the arms of Mahar Vanda, the school of the Nautch girls, of Benares, called in our tongue, the "Nach."'

"To make of the Ranee Hunil Earles a Nautch girl. Ah! if the Rajah Ross but

knew, how he would pray to his white gods to send merciful steel or lead to find his heart."

Silence fell between the two Brahmans as they sat facing each other upon the blanket before the hut of Chandrath Singh.

"Now, Benath, let us sleep. To-morrow he comes. I shall give into his hand the base *khanda* and *khanga* that you have brought. Also, I shall give him the half of the vial of *gugule*. Against the coming of the month, Hamareta, I shall commune with our little god of justice and of wisdom for guidance."

Benath flung his hands, laughed appreciatively at the jest.

"Ganese, our little god of justice. In the morning, Benath, take up your bivouac in a thicket here below, within call of my voice. Now let us sleep, my kinsman."

His high-piled, yellow turban upon his head, about his neck the five stranded silk, *janeo* cord, the wearing of which in Benares would have cost a Sudra his life, Mahar Vanda came early to the hut of Chandrath Singh. The limping tiger sat before the cabin, upon the gray blanket and before him rested something wrapped about in snowy cloth.

Exclaiming, Mahar Vanda seated himself, reached for the bundle, tumbled out the steel dagger and the iron comb. With a glad cry he whisked off the yellow turban, thrust into his short, stubble of hair the dagger and the comb. Deftly he wound the turban back into place, and complacently patted the insignia of his exalted, new station.

He was a Singh, a twice-born Brahman.

His sinister countenance had become almost benevolent as he looked about him. "I'll have this sty ripped down, Chandrath Singh," said Mahar, "and have built for you a better cabin."

"Many thanks," replied Chandrath dryly. "A fox in an elephant's hide is still a fox. This low-roofed hut will suffice for what tenancy I shall require of it."

Mahar Vanda had risen and was pacing a brief span back and forth. Mahar Vanda Singh. His gold would buy him, in Benares, servile Nayars and Kammalan to bear his

palanquin, to cry aloud, "Way for the Mahar Vanda Singh." In Benares he would have for his *caudhram*, his mistress, the beautiful Nautch girl, Hunil Earles. Way for the Mahar Vanda Singh.

The voice of Chandrath recalled him from out the garden of enchantment. "The incense of *gugule*, Mahar Singh."

From the baggy front of his *chapkan*, Chandrath brought forth the small, leaden vial, and handed it to the Sudra.

"Waste it not, Mahar Singh," cautioned Chandrath, "for it is rare and precious. At night a Brahman rubs a drop into his hair and places a drop upon the turban cloth. Thus we use the *gugule*, Mahar Singh."

Mahar Vanda bowed pompously, placed the leaden vial in his own robe, and marched importantly away toward the low-roofed structure set apart from the log-camp buildings, his living quarters.

Once within the place he drew the metal cork from the vial, poured several drops upon his turban cloth. Then he seated himself upon a low stool, looked about at the rich hangings, the silken rugs, the mattress upon the floor in the corner. The splendor of a Brahman! No matter, in Benares, his gold would be fittings finer still, for him, and his *caudhram*, the Nautch girl, Hunil Earles.

Upon the wall hung a Hindu calendar. A moment Mahar regarded the calendar, then arose, turned the key in the lock, pulled the curtains over the screened windows, and lighted a squat, brass lamp. Pulling aside one of the rugs, he lifted a loose board, and from the space beneath hauled out a leather sack.

From the sack he poured upon the table, and piled into neat stacks, Canadian, American gold and currency, hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands of dollars.

He had prospered, the Mahar Vanda Singh. The profits of the toil of hundreds of Sudra laborers lay spread before him, Sudras, and, yes, the labor of one high-caste Brahman had profited him.

Mahar lifted his hand to feel the press of the dagger and comb in his coarse hair. Not in dollars had the high-caste Brahman paid, but in counsel, aid, tutelage. That had been a master stroke, that hour's work

of filing the cable nearly through, for it had delivered the broken, helpless tiger into his hands.

Mahar Vanda lifted his hand, spread the fingers, began to tell them off. Yet five days, and it would be the first of the month, Hamareta. Five days! But why wait? "In an eye wink, fate will crack a vessel that was a year in the making," says the wise book of the Four Dervishes.

Why wait?

Thrusting the treasure back into its hiding-place, Mahar Vanda replaced the board, smoothed the rug, unlocked the door. Standing in the doorway, he clapped his hands sharply. From the long bunk-house three score yards distant, came an answering voice, and presently a short, powerfully built Sudra stood before him. At a sign from Mahar the laborer entered the master's house.

"Bhim, to-night, I would go upon a long journey. Take the word to the skipper of the tugboat that tows my logs, to have his boat at the landing to-night, at the middle watch *ghatika*, midnight. Stay."

Mahar Vanda walked to a cupboard which was fastened against the wall, took down a brass can about four inches high and an inch and a half in diameter. Removing the top, he glanced at the contents, a thick, viscid mass which gave off a rank, weedy smell.

"Give this into the hand of Warburton Earles, the Englishman, with my compliments. Say to him that this is the finest Pen Yen smoking opium, worth a hundred dollars a tael. My compliments to Warburton Earles. Let none see you deliver the gift, Bhim. Understand? And yet another command, Bhim. Give heed. At an hour before the middle watch to-night, come hither, knock upon the door and arouse me, for I would sleep a while before starting on my long journey. Understand — everything?"

Bhim bowed low, tucked the five-ael can of opium in a fold of his ragged *sari*, made through the wood in the direction of the dwelling of the Englishman.

Through the open door leading into an adjoining room, Bhim caught sight of a pale-faced girl who stood drumming ner-



vously upon the window-pane with her fingers. Warburton Earles, his face a sickly, fish-belly white, his once powerful form attenuated to a skeleton thinness, motioned for Bhim to close the door when the latter held up his hand indicating that he had something confidential to communicate. At sight of the shining brass can, Earles snatched it like a dog snatching a bone.

"My God," he said hoarsely. "Now I'll sleep—sleep."

From the house of the Englishman, Bhim hurried to the river. The tugboat was just warping in beside the wharf. Briefly, Bhim informed the skipper that the Singh would journey down that river, and had ordered the boat to be held in readiness at the landing at midnight.

Back to the house of Mahar Vanda went the Sudra and reported that he had done as he had been bidden.

"Thanks, worthy Bhim. Do not forget to awaken me. Then, for a time I shall have need of your aid. See this gold piece, Bhim? Yours, when I shall have dismissed you after the middle watch to-night."

Twice Mahar Vanda motioned for Bhim to go. The Sudra stood staring at the splendid, silken turban cloth that Mahar had laid upon the table, and at the new *khanga* and *khanda* lying beside it.

The simple heart of Bhim, the laborer grew troubled as he walked the floor of the bunk-house, mediating, first upon the gold piece and then upon that oath sworn to the limping tiger.

At ten o'clock Bhim left the bunk-house, stole through the wood, knocked upon the low door of the tiger's hut.

Like some great land crab, Chandrath Singh came floundering to the door. "The blessing of a Brahman upon thee, Bhim, now and ever. Smoking opium to the white man—the boat in readiness at midnight."

"Yes, noble Chandrath Singh, I told the boatman the 'Singh' would have need of it."

"The Singh! In all this wood, excepting Benath, my kinsman, and me, there is no Singh. Give attention, Bhim. Down the wood two hundred paces is a thatched hut in a tangle of alder sleeps my kinsman, Benath. Call him hither. Then go at once

to your own bed, Bhim. The thanks and blessings of a Brahman go with thee."

Bhim disappeared into the wood, and presently Benath stood beside Chandrath Singh.

"Benath, fetch forth the god of justice."

Benath bowed his tall form, entered the hut, reappeared with a small, closely woven, wicker cage. From a small vial, Chandrath Singh dropped several drops of pungent smelling liquid upon a cloth, held the cloth toward the cage upon a stick.

There was an angry hissing, a thump, and a cobra reared its head, the hood swelling, bloating monstrosly as the serpent caught the hated smell of *gugule*.

"Gan-eeese! Gan-eeese!"

Hissing the name, Chandrath advanced the cloth. The deadly thing, its eyes shining like jewels, darted its tongue, struck, and struck again, savagely, impotently against the side of the cage.

Far from him Chandrath flung the tainted cloth, the serpent subsiding into a quiet coil upon the cage floor.

"Now, Benath."

Lifting the form of the limping tiger as if it had been that of an infant, Benath walked toward the dwelling of Mahar Vanda Singh, Chandrath holding the cage of the little god of justice in one withered hand.

Through the screen came the deep, even breathing of him destined for a long journey. Softly Benath slid back the screen. Chandrath opened the door of the wicker cage. There was a soft thud as Ganese struck upon the floor, a hiss, a rasping noise as it made its way toward the corner whence came that hated smell of the incense of the third secret rite.

Benath slid the screen back into place, lifted his kinsman in his arms.

"To the river, Benath. The boat awaits the coming of the Singh."

A distance toward the river Benath lowered Chandrath Singh to the ground and pointed for the limping tiger to observe the brightness of the stars.

"*Sri Krishna saranam mama*," said Chandrath Singh reverently.

"*Sri Krishna saranam mama*," repeated Benath. "Holy Krishna be my refuge."

# The Bonehead\*

## by Frederic Arnold Kummer

Author of "The Peacock's Eye," "The Brute," "The Painted Woman," etc.

### CHAPTER I.

FROM FLATBUSH TO BOHEMIA.

ROBERT CAMPBELL pushed open the door of the big studio room, stuck in his head and glanced cautiously about. The half-scared, half-sheepish look upon his face disappeared as he saw that there was no one in the place. Throwing his hat and overcoat on a chair, he allowed his gaze to sweep about the room with an expression of the utmost annoyance and distaste.

He was a big man, solid and business-like in his suit of gray tweed, and his appearance contrasted strangely with the exotic atmosphere of the studio, weirdly futuristic in its appointments and colorings.

He sniffed suspiciously at the heavy, incense-laden air, coughed, sneezed, blew his nose. Then, with an air of decision he strode to the fat brass Buddha which stood on a table at the rear of the room, picked up the bronze incense burner before it, and hastily dumped its contents into a huge Japanese jar. A book, placed over the mouth of the jar, effectively prevented the further spread of the fumes. Mr. Campbell glanced quickly through the violet velvet curtains which hung before the doorway at his left, took a cigar from his pocket, lit it, then sat down with an air of content.

The room in which he sat fairly shrieked its futuristic tendencies. The walls, a vivid peacock-blue, jangled with doors and woodwork of bright scarlet. The chairs were yellow and green, the rugs black and white, in strange, scrawling patterns. Over a table

of Chinese teakwood inlaid with mother-of-pearl hung an orange scarf. The array of candlesticks upon the table suggested every known form of art, from Benvenuto Cellini to Aztec pottery work. Over the great brass Buddha hung a Venetian lantern, its soft light glowing faintly through the murk of incense.

Spanish chests, Russian samovars, French tapestries, revealed themselves in far corners. If the room expressed any one's personality, certainly that person possessed a violently cosmopolitan taste. The bulky figure of Mr. Campbell, placidly smoking his cigar in a crimson velvet-and-gold throne chair, seemed utterly incongruous and out of place. One might have pictured him eating beefsteak and onions in a comfortable chop-house, but here he most positively did not belong.

The ringing of the door-bell startled him from his evening paper, caused him to drop his cigar. Recovering it with a growl of annoyance, he rose to admit a smartly dressed young chap, somewhat his junior in years, but of a not dissimilar type.

"Griggs!" he exclaimed, extending his hand. "How are you? Welcome to our happy home."

The newcomer smiled, and the two men shook hands warmly.

"Heard you had moved from Flatbush down here to Greenwich Village, so I thought I'd run down and look you over. Say—nobody sick, is there?" He sniffed inquiringly.

"Sick? Why?"

"Queer smell." He sniffed again.

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"Thought you might be having the place fumigated." For the first time since his entrance he allowed his gaze to wander about the room. His jaw sagged as he took in the details of the place. "Suffering cats!" he ejaculated.

Mr. Campbell grinned.

"Well—how do you like it?" he asked.

"Like it! What is it?"

"Search me. Betty says it's a futurist dream."

"Nightmare, you mean. What's the idea?"

"I don't think there is any. Have a cigar." He extracted one from a humidor on the table. "Don't know anything better, to kill that joss-house smell."

Mr. Griggs lit his cigar, still staring, stupefied, about the room.

"Well!" he exclaimed at length. "If anybody had told me that you, Bob Campbell, a respectable dealer in Portland cement, would ever live in a place like this, I'd have said they were nutty. I can't understand it."

"Neither can I, but Betty says *she* does, so it's all right."

"So she got you down here, did she?"

"Rather. All her own little idea. Have a chair."

Mr. Griggs seated himself somewhat gingerly in a yellow-and-green affair with a narrow, straight back suggestive of a *garrote*.

"Let's have the awful details," he said.

"Well—Betty, you know, has gone in for new thought—living one's life free and untrammelled—free life—free verse—free love—all that sort of thing. It wasn't so bad, while we were in Flatbush. Not much new thought in Flatbush. That's why she insisted on coming over here."

"I see. Bohemia, and all that."

"Exactly. Red ink for dinner, and everybody in love with the other fellow's wife. Great stuff, if you like it." He took a book from the table beside him. "This is the sort of thing she reads, 'My Naked Soul,' by Mrs. Ashton St. Clair. Friend of ours."

"No!"

"Fact." Mr. Campbell took another book from the table. "Here's one by her

husband, called 'Polygamy for the Masses.' Nice little volume for home reading, eh, what?" He grinned at Mr. Griggs, who uttered an expressive grunt. "Ah—here's the prize of the collection. 'My Violet Loves,' by Horace Frothingham. Oh, Horace!"

"I say—what sort of junk—"

"Careful, old chap," Mr. Campbell interrupted. "Horace is a great friend of ours."

Mr. Griggs twisted himself in his chair. On the wall opposite him hung a picture. He gazed at it with bulging eyes.

"And I suppose that thing was painted by a friend of yours, too?"

"Well, I should say so. Present to my wife, from Clarence Potts, the artist. He's a post-cubist."

"Post-cubist? What's that?"

"How the devil should I know? He doesn't himself." He turned to the picture with a grin. "It's called 'Dying Faun with Green Olives.' How do you like it?"

Mr. Griggs got up and proceeded to examine the picture.

"Where are the olives?" he presently asked.

"Search me, unless the faun's eaten them. Maybe that's why he's sick. Symbolism, you know."

"H-m!" Mr. Griggs seemed relieved. "At first I thought it was a picture of a ship."

"That's because you aren't a post-cubist. You've got to be one, you know, to get these things." He turned to another picture. "Here's one called 'Nude Dreams.' Ever have any dreams like that?"

"Not yet, thank God!" exclaimed Mr. Griggs, wiping his brow.

"What do you think of this 'Study of a Thin Lady Taking a Bath'?" Mr. Campbell went on, indicating another canvas.

Mr. Griggs sank into a chair.

"She certainly looks as though she'd taken *something*," he gasped. "Say, do you mean to tell me you actually have to *meet* these ginks?"

"Meet them! Why, man alive, I not only have to meet them—I have to talk to them, feed them, let them smoke my cigars—even lend them money."

"But why? What's the big idea? You don't like it, do you?"

Mr. Campbell became suddenly serious.

"I'll tell you why, Jimmy," he said. "Ever since Betty had that poem of hers published in the *Uplift Magazine*, she's fancied herself a genius. Says she has to live in an atmosphere where her ego can develop—expand—reach out toward the light. She decided it couldn't do it in Flatbush. Must be something awful to have an ingrowing ego. Ever have one?"

"Not so you could notice it."

"So when she picked out a studio over here, where everybody talks art with a capital 'A,' why, I—well, you're not married yourself, Jimmy, so you can't understand these things, but I just couldn't say no. She'd set her heart on being a new-thoughter, and that's all there was to it. So here we are."

Mr. Griggs knocked the ashes from his cigar.

"Well, Bob," he remarked, "all I can say is, I'm sorry for you."

"I'm sorry for myself, but what's the use? Betty's happy."

"Where is she?"

"Search me. Out somewhere with the bunch. They generally show up about this time for tea."

"The bunch?"

"Certainly. The futurists, post-cubists, birth-controllers, social reformers, free-lovers, and all the rest. Stick around and meet them."

"Excuse me." Mr. Griggs nervously consulted his watch. "Guess I'd better be going. All the free love I ever had was too damned expensive." He groped for his hat.

Mr. Campbell took him by the arm.

"Look here, Jimmy," he said. "Don't desert me like this. I want your opinion of one of these chaps. Fellow with the violet loves. Frothingham—Horace Frothingham. I'm afraid he's gone and fallen in love with my wife. Imagines she's his soul-mate, or something. I want you to give him the once-over."

"Well—I like his nerve. Why don't you throw him out?"

"Oh, it wouldn't do at all. It's quite

the proper thing down here to have a soul-mate. Everybody has one. Betty calls him 'Horrie'!"

Mr. Griggs fanned himself dazedly with his hat.

"Horrie!" he whispered to himself. "Good God!"

"Fact. Says he's a second Swinburne and Chopin, rolled into one. Oh, yes—he plays. Some little performer on the piano. It gets the girls, too, believe me."

"Second Swinburne!" Mr. Griggs repeated dazedly.

"Sure. Most of them are seconds, of some sort, down here. He calls Betty 'Cleo.' Short for Cleopatra, you know. Pretty nifty, don't you think? Got it all doped out that they met, centuries ago, in Carthage, or Babylon, or some such place. No—I don't mean Long Island."

"And you stand for stuff like that?" Griggs asked.

"What else can I do? Betty says she's happier than she's ever been in her life. After all, I'm only her husband, you know."

"Well, you may know what you're about, Bob, but my advice to you is to move to a respectable neighborhood, before you get into trouble."

"No use," Mr. Campbell replied, dejectedly. "Betty says only stupid people are respectable." He puffed at his cigar for a while in moody silence. "What are you doing to-night, Jimmy?" he asked at length.

"Going to a prize-fight. Want to go along?"

Mr. Campbell brightened at once.

"Oh, boy! Where is it?"

"Over at the athletic club. Eddie Moran, the Boston Terrier, and Jim Dixon, that new lightweight from Jersey City. Going to be some little scrap, believe me. Are you on?"

"Surest thing you know. Just stick around until I get things settled for the evening. And, remember—we've got a big business deal on—cement for that new warehouse you're designing. Get me?"

"I'm wise."

"And we'll have dinner together—at White's. A nice thick sirloin steak, with hashed brown potatoes. M-m!" He



smacked his lips. "Haven't had a decent meal since I struck the table d'hôte district." He started from his chair as a sound of footsteps, voices, drifted in from the hall. "Sh! Here they come. String 'em along."

## CHAPTER II.

### TWO TOUCHES AND TAGORE.

THE door opened, and Betty Campbell came in, a strikingly pretty young woman, in spite of the seriousness with which she apparently took herself. Her brown hair was bobbed, and she wore a curious costume of violet broadcloth, with sandals. With her were two men—one of them, Clarence Potts, small, dapper and lively; the other the violet poet, Horace Frothingham. The latter was tall, lean and somewhat hungry-looking, affectedly dressed, with a loose bow-tie, and a thin mane of hair over his coat-collar. Jimmy Griggs gazed at the trio in unconcealed surprise.

As soon as she recognized him, Betty came up, her hand outstretched.

"Why, Mr. Griggs," she exclaimed, "I haven't seen you for ages."

"It has certainly seemed ages," mumbled Mr. Griggs, bromidically.

"How nice to have you come and see us. I want you to know my friends, Mr. Potts, the artist, and Mr. Frothingham, the poet. Mr. Griggs is an architect, Horrie. He creates, too." She turned to her husband. "We've had such a wonderful time, Bob. At Mrs. Bacon-Boyle's studio. She read selections from Tagore. What was that one I liked so much, Horrie? Something about a dimpled dewdrop on a baby's cheek, wasn't it, or was it a dewdrop on a dimpled baby's cheek? Funny, I can't remember."

"Really," sighed Mr. Frothingham, with a look of utter boredom, "I can't say. Tagore does not interest me. He is a *poseur*, not a poet."

"That's awfully good, Horrie. Put it down. You may want to use it. And Helen Duncan danced," she rattled on to Mr. Griggs and her husband—"Greek dances, you know. She's so plastic. And such de-

lightfully lovely feet. Horrie is going to write an ode to her twinkling toes."

"Not an ode, my dear," Mr. Frothingham corrected reprovingly. "A trioleet."

"Oh, yes—so it was. A violet trioleet. Too lovely for words. Sit down, everybody, while I get some tea. The others will be along presently." She vanished behind the purple curtain.

Mr. Potts took Mr. Griggs by the arm. His small eyes gleamed with interest.

"So you are an architect, my dear fellow. Just the man I wanted to meet. By the curse of fate I'm obliged to waste my most unusual talents doing corset ads for a low-brow magazine, but I have ideas for mural decoration that would surprise you. Haven't you a hall you would like decorated? Color—divinely riotous color—that is my forte. Here—look at this—my latest." He dragged the unfortunate Griggs toward the canvas representing his conception of "Nude Dreams." Mr. Frothingham, who had apparently been watching his opportunity, went up to Campbell with an air of melancholy.

"Mr. Campbell," he whispered in tense tones, "in deepest distress I once more turn to you."

"What's the matter now? Nothing wrong, I hope?"

"Everything is wrong. To-day, of all days, I find myself without funds."

"Why to-day especially?"

"Because my rent is due. I had counted on a payment from my publisher, but he is out of town. Now, if, for a few brief days, you could do me the favor—"

"How much?" Campbell interrupted, thrusting his hand into his pocket.

"Ten would do," returned the poet, with sudden alacrity.

Mr. Campbell detached a bill from the roll he held in his hand.

"That makes sixty," he said.

"But sixty evidences of your splendid generosity," remarked Mr. Frothingham, pocketing the bill as Mr. Potts and his companion rejoined them.

"Symbolism—my dear sir—nothing but symbolism," the former was saying.

"Nobody ever heard of a purple pumpkin," objected Griggs feebly.

"Wrong, my dear sir—absolutely wrong. In certain lights a pumpkin may be any color—or even none at all. What do you say, Horrie?"

"I trust I have a soul above pumpkins. Come, Mr. Griggs. Let me show you my latest poem. Mrs. Campbell has been good enough to frame the original, in my own handwriting, and preserve it here, among her treasures. 'To Cleopatra.' Read." He indicated a framed bit of verse hanging on the wall. The alacrity with which Mr. Potts took advantage of *his* opportunity to address Mr. Campbell indicated clever teamwork.

"I say, old man," he confided, "I'm in an awful hole. I wonder if you could help me out."

"What's wrong now?"

"Well, you see, I got an order last week for that new poster ad, and it's done, and accepted, but the confounded company only pays on Tuesdays, and this is Friday, so you see—"

Mr. Campbell handed him a bill.

"That makes forty you owe me, Potts," he said.

"You keep track of it, old fellow," Mr. Potts replied blandly. "I've a rotten head for figures."

There came a noisy rapping at the door, and a number of other persons entered. Mr. Campbell presented Mr. Griggs with pains-taking care, unmindful of the latter's smothered suggestions that they had better "beat it." There was Mr. Tomlinson, a thin young man with enormous glasses, who was introduced as America's coming playwright; Ashton St. Clair, the socialistic novelist, forty, and dissipated; Helen Duncan, the Greek dancer, and Mrs. Bacon-Boyle, a plump woman of thirty, so hung with jade necklaces and bangles that she jingled as she walked like an antiquated street car.

They accorded the others languid greetings. Only Mrs. Bacon-Boyle seemed to regard the young architect with interest. She did this with every man she met, and was popularly supposed, among her friends, to be seeking an astral affinity.

"What a pity you weren't with us this afternoon, Mr. Griggs," she cooed. "Don't you just *love* Tagore?"

"Tagore?" stammered Griggs. "I—I don't believe I've ever tasted any. What is it?"

"An attitude, my dear fellow—just an attitude," interjected Mr. Tomlinson, smiling at Mrs. Bacon-Boyle's discomfiture.

Mr. Campbell came to his friend's rescue.

"Wake up, old man," he said. "Tagore is a Hindu poet."

"Oh! I—I thought it was a new brand of tea." Mr. Griggs mopped his forehead and cast furtive glances at the door.

"Your ignorance of Tagore, Mr. Griggs, does you credit," observed Mr. St. Clair, with a cynical smile. "I think he's a bore."

"Why, Ashton?" inquired Miss Duncan, making eyes at him.

"Because he's sexless. I tell you, sex is everything. Now in my new novel—"

"Sex is nothing but materialism—gross materialism," snapped Mrs. Bacon-Boyle.

"Well," returned St. Clair, laughing, "without it you wouldn't be here, or any of the rest of us, for that matter."

Mrs. Bacon-Boyle changed the subject abruptly.

"Let me see your color to-day, Mr. Campbell," she said, observing him through half-closed eyes. "Yes—green—dark-green."

"Green! What the dev—"

"Your aura, of course. Hasn't Betty told you that I'm spiritually sensitive to the color of every one's aura? Your friend, Mr. Griggs is red—a dull-red. You should be more careful of your aura, Mr. Griggs. Red means sin—the gross, material sin of the flesh. What have you on your mind?"

"Why—a—a beefsteak, just at the moment," replied the architect, backing away.

"I knew it. Flesh. Red flesh. You should never eat meat, Mr. Griggs. It is degrading—low—"

"Low. It's fifty cents a pound."

"In my next play," observed Mr. Tomlinson, "I mean to make my hero a cannibal. Just imagine the novelty of—"

"In my new novel," interrupted St. Clair, "I shall show sex in its true light as the great motive power of all human—"

Mrs. Bacon-Boyle refused to be downed.

"Tagore has shown us the way," she asserted. "Our lives should be lived on the



astral plane—sexless, sinless, deathless. Listen.” She began to chant some Hindu verses, but nobody paid any attention to her. The entrance of Betty Campbell with a tea-tray interested them far more. Mr. Frothingham, who had been scribbling at the desk in melancholy silence, hastened to her assistance. Mr. Campbell went to the cellaret and took out a decanter and some glasses.

“Speaking of tea,” he said, “who’ll have a drink?”

The response was instantaneous, enthusiastic. The whole party made a rush for him.

“Don’t crowd. Watch your step,” he went on, winking at Mr. Griggs as the others noisily mixed their highballs.

“I say, Bob,” the architect whispered, when the various couples had secured their drinks and begun a series of flirtations in remote corners, “I’ve got to get out of here—”

“Wait. There are more coming. I want you to see the whole show.”

“Good Lord!” muttered Griggs, and poured himself a double drink.

“Look here. I can’t find the cigars,” came from Potts, who had been fumbling among the objects on the desk. Mr. Campbell pointed to the humidior on the table.

“Help yourself,” he said, then went to the door as the bell rang. Mr. Potts, unnoticed, proceeded to fill his pockets.

### CHAPTER III.

JEAN BRENT.

A CHORUS of greetings welcomed the newcomers, Mrs. St. Clair, a *passé* vampire of thirty-five; Mr. Van Hoosen, an oily looking man of fifty, with a pointed beard; and Jean Brent, a fresh and charming girl of twenty, who seemed strangely out of place in this cynical and sophisticated atmosphere. There were more noisy introductions, more drinks, in which Miss Brent did not join. Instead, she came toward Mr. Campbell, towing in her wake the elderly man with the Vandyke beard.

“Oh, Mr. Campbell,” she said, with a charming smile. “I want you to meet my music-teacher, Professor Van Hoosen.”

The professor fixed Campbell with a fishy eye.

“You sing, *monsieur*?” he inquired. “You have ze voice, yes? If so, I have one method extraordinaire. In six months I make of you anozzer Caruso. And my charges—so modest—but twenty dollaire ze hour. Allow me—my card.” He thrust the bit of pasteboard into Campbell’s hand. “When Mees Brent she come to me, she could not reach ze F. In anozzer month she take ze high C as easy—as easy”—his eyes wandered toward the cellaret—“as easy as I take one little drink?”

He dashed away. Mr. Griggs gazed at the girl’s lovely face, and groaned. What was she doing in this crowd? He felt a sudden and quite unreasonable interest in the matter.

“You haven’t been in New York long, I judge, Miss Brent,” he ventured. “How do you like it?”

“I think it’s perfectly wonderful,” the girl replied enthusiastically. “So full of artists—”

“Simply rotten with them,” observed Mr. Campbell, as he turned away, “facial—ton-sorial—shoe-shining—manicure—the woods is full of ’em.”

“You mustn’t make fun of me, Mr. Campbell. Since I came to New York I’ve really begun to live—to grow—to expand—”

“Get it, Jimmy? They all want to expand down here. Most of them keep right on expanding till they burst.”

Mr. Griggs frowned. He seemed unable to keep his eyes off Miss Brent’s face. There was perhaps excellent reason for this; her unspoiled complexion, her unsophisticated and youthful charm were in striking contrast to the somewhat jaded attractions of the women about her.

“Shut up, Bob!” he whispered. “Miss Brent’s all right. You run along and talk to the purple poet. He seems to be making desperate love to your wife.”

“Naturally. That’s what they all do down here. It’s in the air. If you don’t do it to somebody’s wife, they think you’re a bonehead.”

“Well, why not try Mrs. St. Clair, then? She seems in need of consolation. Run

along. I want to talk to Miss Brent." He drew the girl to a seat beside him in a far corner of the room. The shrill, incessant chatter of the others of the party had begun to get on his nerves.

"Don't you just *love* Bohemia, Mr. Griggs?" she asked him, as they sat down.

"Afraid I don't know much about it—this sort, at least. Just what do you mean by Bohemia, Miss Brent?" He watched her face curiously as he waited for her reply.

"Why—freedom—mental and moral freedom—living one's life according to one's desires, instead of according to a lot of stupid rules."

Mr. Griggs sighed. He recognized, in her glibly expressed opinions a reflection of the views of the little world in which she moved, a world that, instead of regulating its acts in accordance with any fixed standards, created innumerable and usually conflicting standards to suit its acts. It seemed a pity, he thought, that this unspoiled young girl should be caught in these degenerating toils.

"It is a wonderful theory, Miss Brent," he observed with a twinkle of amusement in his eyes, "that one of living one's life according to one's desires. But it doesn't seem to work out, in practise."

"Why not? It's what I'm doing. What every one should do."

"Really. I wish I could believe it. Take myself, for instance. Just at present my greatest desire is to kiss you," he leaned toward her. "According to your theories I ought to do it." He was on the point of putting the theory into practise when his companion rose.

"But I don't want you to kiss me," she said, flushing.

"What's that got to do with it?"

"Why—you—you can't follow out your desires irrespective of other people, you know."

"That's just it. One of the stupid laws you made fun of a moment ago. I'm conventional, I suppose. If I weren't, I'd have kissed you anyway, whether you wanted me to or not. You see, Miss Brent, nobody is really free. Nobody can live his or her life without considering the feelings and wishes of other people. That's the mistake

this bunch makes." He waved his hand about the studio. "Don't let them fill you up with a lot of nonsense about life. Why, if we all were free to do just what we feel like doing when the impulse strikes us, the world would be a madhouse."

The girl stared at him, interested but unconvinced.

"You're making fun of me, Mr. Griggs," she said.

"Indeed I'm not. I understand better than you think. I venture to say that you were raised in a small town where a woman who dared to smoke a cigarette was looked on as a lost soul, and now that you're here in New York, where you can smoke all the cigarettes you like, you think you're free. Not a bit of it, my dear." He took out his cigarette-case and extended it to her. "No fun in doing the things you can do. It's doing those you can't, that makes life interesting. Have one?"

She shook her head, laughing a little as she observed his expression of relief.

"You *are* conventional, aren't you?" she said. "I believe you're positively glad I don't smoke. Well, I would if I felt like it, but it's bad for my voice."

"Another law," he grinned. "The reason we don't do most of the things we'd like to do is because they are bad for us. What's going on now?" He turned toward the piano, at which Mr. Frothingham had just seated himself.

Miss Brent followed his gaze. Horace had begun to play, with exaggerated intensity, a popular air.

"Why, don't you know?" she replied. "Mr. Frothingham—Horace, is sending a soul message to me." She listened to the music with smiling eyes.

"A soul message?" gasped Griggs, staring at her. "What do you mean by that expression?"

"Why—he—he says that the soul can speak in only two ways—through poetry, and through music. Hush! You mustn't interrupt him." She gazed raptly at Mr. Frothingham, then moved toward the piano.

Griggs gazed at the violet poet with ill-concealed hostility. He had meant to have a much longer talk with Miss Brent, and now she was being unceremoniously dragged



away from him. Horace sat at the piano, striking the keys with soulful emphasis, and meanwhile fixing Miss Brent with a hypnotic eye.

His command of the piano was unusually good; he distorted, changed, emphasized the notes and phrases of the popular air until it actually seemed that they poured forth a passionate appeal. Miss Brent, fascinated, leaned against the piano. In a low voice Horace addressed her, so that none of the others might hear.

"White hyacinth, why did you refuse me? Like the great golden sun I would have kissed you, awakened you, caused your budding soul to blossom into a wonderful flower."

Mrs. Campbell, observing her purple poet pouring his poetic soul into another woman's eyes, grew jealous.

"Horrie, you haven't told me what you think of my new figurine—that dancing satyr I picked up the other day, over on the avenue. Come, let me show it to you." She led him from the piano to a little curio-rack at the rear of the room. Jean Brent sighed, smiled a little, then turned as Mr. Griggs came up to her.

"What was he saying to you?" he inquired irritably.

Miss Brent laughed.

"Do you know, Mr. Griggs, I can't for the life of me make up my mind whether Horace is a genius or just a clever *poseur*. What do you think?"

Mr. Griggs growled something beneath his breath, which his companion did not catch.

"What did you say?" she asked.

"Oh—nothing, nothing. I haven't known him long enough to judge. Only met him this afternoon. But, just as an offhand opinion, I never thought that the absence of a hair-cut made a man a genius."

She laughed gaily at this, as her eyes followed Mr. Frothingham's progress across the room.

"You should read his poems. Then you wouldn't think about his hair. Listen to this." She took a purple-bound volume from the table and began to read:

"Ethereal hours spent with you  
Beneath the pulsing purple skies,

Pale poppies, passionate in hue  
That bend on us their drowsy eyes,  
The placid stars, the lambent moon,  
The far-off cry of—"

Mr. Griggs took the book from her, closed it firmly, and placed it on the table.

"If you don't mind," he said, "suppose we leave the pulsing purple skies and the rest of it till some other time. I want to talk about you."

"I'm afraid there isn't much to say about me—yet. I'm an unknown. Wait till I've arrived. Too bad you don't like poetry."

Mr. Potts joined them at this juncture, proudly bearing a highball. He made a deep salaam.

"Miss Jean, queen of my heart, I salute you," he said. "Accept this modest token of my affection." He presented the highball. "Then we will retire to some distant corner and talk of love—free, free love."

"To say nothing of free highballs—free cigars," observed Campbell, *sotto voce*.

Mr. Potts led the Brent girl away. Griggs looked after her, a queer light in his eyes.

"Say, Bob," he burst out, "that kid's got no business here with this bunch. Can't you get your wife to speak to her?"

"Good Lord, Jimmy! I'm looking for some one to speak to my wife. Gaze upon her, flirting with the purple poet." He beckoned to Mrs. Campbell to join them, which she did rather reluctantly.

"I say, Betty," he began, "Griggs and I have a big deal we've got to talk over—cement, you know—if you don't mind, we'll be getting along—"

"What's your hurry, Mr. Griggs? Is this your first glimpse of Greenwich Village? You don't live down here, do you?"

"No, Mrs. Campbell. As a matter of fact, I live in Brooklyn, but I'm thinking of making a change. Looking for an apartment right now."

"Isn't that splendid? The one on the floor above has just been vacated. Why not take that? Bob and I would simply love to have you so near us." She turned to her husband. "Bob—take Mr. Griggs up and show him the place at once, before somebody else gets it."

Mr. Campbell began to make some objection, but Griggs had already secured his

hat. The opportunity to escape was too good to be lost. Already he saw Mrs. St. Clair bearing down on him from a distant corner.

"Come along, Bob," he urged. "I'm crazy to see that apartment."

"Hurry back," Mrs. Campbell called after them. "We're all going to the Green Rabbit for dinner. You can talk about your old cement afterward."

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### "A PURPLE ABYSS."

MRS. ST. CLAIR gazed after the disappearing couple with disappointed eyes.

"I want a man to talk to," she exclaimed.

"You can't have your husband," objected Helen Duncan. "We're talking sex."

"I don't want *him*."

"Campbell's a good sort," remarked Mr. Potts, taking another handful of cigars from the humidor.

"Awful bonehead," Mr. Frothingham joined them, exhibiting a profound melancholy.

"Really, Horrie," objected Mrs. Campbell, "you shouldn't say such things about my husband."

"One's views must be free, my dear. The fact that he is your husband is unfortunate, but it does not alter the matter in the least. Makes it rather worse."

"Your aura is off color to-day, Horace," laughed Mrs. Bacon-Boyle. "Deep-orange."

"Lemon," Mr. St. Clair muttered aside. "I say, what about dinner? I'm getting sort of empty."

"What a materialist you are, Mr. St. Clair!" Mrs. Bacon-Boyle remarked. "A crust, a bit of fruit, or rice, is quite enough."

"Oh, Vi!" exclaimed Miss Duncan with a lazy laugh. "When that old fool from Chicago I introduced you to, invited us to dine at the Ritz, you ate the whole bill, from soup to nuts. Don't talk to me about your vegetarianism. Keep it for publicity stuff."

"We all have our weak moments," remarked Mrs. Bacon-Boyle placidly.

Mr. St. Clair began to put on his coat.

"Think I'll move along," he said. "See you all at the restaurant. Better bring that Griggs chap along. Somebody's got to pay for the dinner. Come, dear." He went out with his wife.

"St. Clair is getting to be an awful bore," remarked Mr. Potts, airily. "Rutted. Hopelessly rutted. I feel sorry for him."

"I feel sorry for his wife," observed Mrs. Bacon-Boyle. "Just fancy being married to a Bolshevik."

"Only a parlor Bolshevik, my dear. Perfectly tame." Miss Duncan smiled significantly. "I tried him. Come along, Clarence. I'm counting on you to take me to dinner. See you all later." She and Mr. Potts left the room, followed by Miss Brent and Professor Van Hoosen.

"I'm really distressed about Helen," Mrs. Bacon-Boyle sighed as the dancer went out. "She seems to think of nothing but food. All the time, my dear. Most bourgeois, don't you think? Well, Tommy"—she turned to Mr. Tomlinson—"isn't it about time we went to dinner?"

The playwright had been sitting at the desk making voluminous notes on the back of an envelope. He rose and thrust it into his pocket.

"Just thought of a new situation," he announced as he joined the others. "Artist can't get his work recognized. Pretends suicide. Thinking him dead, the stupid public declares him a genius. He returns. Has the laugh on them. Curtain. Great, eh, what?" He looked to the others for approval.

Mr. Frothingham yawned.

"Hasn't been used since the 'Great Adventure,'" he observed cynically. "Tolstoi did it fairly well in 'Dead or Alive.' Better try again, Tommy."

Mr. Tomlinson looked somewhat crestfallen.

"Oh, well," he said. "There aren't any really new situations. Aren't you coming along, Mrs. Campbell?"

"Not just yet. Horace and I will wait for my husband."

"See you later, then." He and Mrs. Bacon-Boyle went out.

"Isn't it terrible," Betty remarked, as the door closed behind them, "the unkind



way in which they all talk about one another?"

"Isn't it?" Horace agreed. "Shameful! And just a lot of rotters, after all. I'm glad they've gone." He came up to Mrs. Campbell, his arms extended.

"Alone at last!" he murmured. "One kiss from those divine lips—"

"Really, Horrie, you mustn't—"

"Oh, if you were but mine—wholly, utterly mine."

Mrs. Campbell eluded him and went toward the purple curtain.

"I—I think I'll change my gown," she said.

"Wait," Mr. Frothingham called after her, but she had disappeared. He went to the piano, and, sitting down, began to play, his eyes upon the door through which she had just gone. The crashing, passionate chords seemed to call to her. He gazed at the door expectantly. Mrs. Campbell put her pretty head through the curtains.

"Please stop it, Horrie, or I'll never get dressed," she said.

"Ah! My purple iris, what does it matter?" He rose and went toward her.

"It matters a lot, Horrie, if we're ever going to get any dinner. Why don't you write something while you are waiting?"

"I will. While you are gone I will pour out my soul in a poem." By way of preparation, he first went to the cellaret and poured out a drink, which he took to the desk with him. For a few moments only the scratching of his pen broke the silence. Then he paused, tossed off the drink, wrote a few more words, then paused again. Apparently the divine afflatus needed encouragement.

He went to the cellaret and took another drink. Again the faint scratching of the pen, followed by another visit to the cellaret. This time Mr. Frothingham did not content himself with the glass, but took the decanter itself back to the desk with him. For a time he wrote spasmodically, punctuating each line with a drink. When Betty returned she found him perusing his work with a pleased smile.

"Did you finish it?" she asked.

Horace rose and ran his fingers through his hair. His eyes lit up with pleasure as

they rested on his companion, strikingly lovely in her gown of peacock-blue.

"My soul has found expression at last," he said.

"Really?" She clapped her hands like a delighted child. "Read it to me, Horrie."

"This poem we shall write together—I one verse—you the other. That is the way the Brownings wrote. It shall be our poem! Sacred to us alone. No other eye shall ever see it. Our poem! What could more perfectly, more beautifully typify the perfect union of two souls? Listen. It is called 'Utterness.' *Vers libre*, of course." He began to read:

"Vast utterness! Utter vastness!  
Sublimated voids—ultraviolet!  
Imponderable ether, forming formless universes—  
Utterness, and two naked souls!"

Mrs. Campbell clasped her hands.

"Oh, Horrie!" she cried. "It—it's splendid!"

"Yes. It *is* splendid." Mr. Frothingham agreed with a complacent smile. "And *you* have made it so. *You* have inspired me." He quietly took the decanter from the desk and placed it upon the cellaret.

"Of course," said Betty, "I—I don't quite understand it, but you will explain it to me, won't you, Horrie?" She gazed at him with an eager smile.

Horace frowned.

"One does not explain soul poetry," he remarked with a suggestion of reproof in his voice. "One must feel it. As well tear to pieces the petals of some tender flower."

"Of course, Horrie. I see that. It was stupid of me."

"Now sit here and write *your* verse," he announced, placing a chair for her.

"Oh, Horrie, I couldn't—really."

"You can—you must! My love will show you the way. Come." He urged her to the desk.

Mrs. Campbell sank into the chair and stared helplessly at the paper before her.

"When you look at me," she said, "I can't think of a thing."

"Then I will go over here." He made his way to the cellaret. "You need not look at me either." He poured out a drink.

Betty was unable to write a line, although she did her best. The words simply refused to come.

"I can't do it!" she exclaimed, throwing down her pen. "Let me try some other time, alone. I feel confused."

Mr. Frothingham was equal to the occasion.

"No," he commanded. "Now. Your soul shall speak through my lips. Write!" He began to dictate ponderously:

"A purple abyss of stars—  
Pale stars. Wan weary stars—  
Suffocated by the cosmic gloom  
Their little voices cry out to me:  
'Utterness. Utterness.'"

Betty dropped her pen and rose.

"Horrie!" she exclaimed. "You are wonderful—simply wonderful."

"Because your love has made me so. I feel that I must kiss you now." He came toward her, his hands clutching his breast. "The artist, the man who creates, gives so much—ah—it is in such moments as this, when his soul has gone out to create a masterpiece, that he craves—love." He swept Betty into his arms, in spite of her protests. "Do you not see that we belong to each other?"

"Horrie—please!" She strove to disengage herself from his embrace.

"Do you not see," he went on, paying no attention to her protests, "that you owe it to yourself, your better nature, to leave this man on whom you are wasting your soul-sweetness, and live your life, free and untrammelled? So many times, during the long, long ages, we two have met, only to part. In Babylon, in Greece, in ancient Rome, I called to you, but you did not hear. Now is the hour in which we are destined by fate to become one. Cosmic forces drive us on. Let us not attempt to evade our destiny." He drew her to him, pressed his lips to hers.

"Horrie—you mustn't—you really mustn't," she gasped. "My husband may return at any moment."

"What does it matter? Who is he to question the decrees of fate? We have no right to struggle against the great adventure. Already we have waited too long."

Betty tore herself away, and going to the little Florentine mirror over the desk, began to arrange her somewhat disordered hair. She was greatly confused. Horace Frothingham made love to her in a way she had never experienced before. It was very different, she thought, from the stolid love-making of her husband. All the romance in her responded to it. Was it true, that she was wasting herself, failing to get from life the sweetness it held? There seemed something frightfully disloyal in even thinking such things, and yet, Bob certainly did not understand her. She turned from the mirror, her face flushed, her eyes very bright.

"Already we have waited too long," she heard Horace repeating.

"Then we had better hurry," she laughed, purposely misinterpreting his meaning. "The others may think it queer."

"What does it matter what they think—what any one thinks, now? My soul-mate!" Once more he came toward her, but stopped, as he heard some one outside the door. "Still, I suppose we must eat," he added lamely. "Are you ready?"

Betty swiftly went to the door.

"Do be careful what you say," she warned. "Bob is frightfully jealous."

"I shall," Horace returned, searching for his hat. "I dislike scenes."

Bob Campbell and Mr. Griggs came in as he spoke.

"Hello!" exclaimed the latter. "Thought you had gone."

"We were waiting for you. Aren't you coming?" Betty pushed into place a vagrant lock of hair.

"Thanks. Griggs and I have simply got to talk over that cement deal. I'm sure you and Mr. Frothingham won't mind."

"Not in the least," the poet assured them. "Come, Cleo." They went out, Betty looking rather uneasily at her husband. His face, however, betrayed only a stolid good nature.

Mr. Griggs threw himself into a chair.

"Well, I'll be damned!" he exclaimed. "Every time I look at that fellow I feel like kicking him."

"I don't," said Mr. Campbell. "I feel like kicking myself."



"It's awful to think of your wife going about with him."

"It would be a lot worse if I had to go, too."

"As for that little Brent girl, I think she's a peach."

"Like her, do you?"

"I certainly do. Just a sweet little out-of-town kid seeing life from the wrong angle."

"And having her voice painlessly extracted at twenty dollars per hour."

"As for Horace, he's a lemon, if I ever saw one."

"Hold on, Jimmy. There must be something good about the fellow, or Betty wouldn't like him."

Griggs rose and went up to his friend.

"Bob," he said, in tones of affection, "you're too damned good to Betty, that's all. She's a woman, and I never saw one yet that wouldn't fall for the kind of guy that can spout violet poetry to her. Wake up, man! This thing has got to be stopped."

"I know it. And I don't see how. I love Betty with all my heart, Jim. I wouldn't see any harm come to her for anything in the world. It would break her heart—and mine. But when a woman gets switched from Flatbush and a baby-carriage to Bohemia and birth-control, it's hard work to switch her back again. Betty's off the track, that's all."

"It's aplenty. Why don't you talk to her?"

"I've talked my head off. The more I say against these people the better she likes them. Now she's got the idea that I'm unsympathetic, commonplace, unable to understand her ambitions."

"How on earth could she expect a decent chap like you to swallow all that stuff—auras—Tagore—astral planes—violet souls—eugenics—polygamy—cubism—socialism—Bolshevism—symbolism—hell!"

Mr. Campbell was regarding the calm, beneficent face of the brass Buddha with somber eyes. Suddenly he wheeled on his companion with a quick laugh.

"I've got it, Jimmy!" he exclaimed. "I will swallow them. Every damned one of them! Hook, line, and sinker!"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that from now on I'm going to be the newest new-thoughter of the bunch. I'll go in for the whole works. All these people do is talk about their theories. They haven't the nerve to go any further. Well—I have! I'm going to practise them! Oh, boy! Just you watch your Uncle Dudley. They've converted me. I've seen the light. From now on free-love is my middle name. Polygamy is right where I live. If there's any 'ism' they've overlooked, I'm for it."

"Betty's going out of town to-morrow for a few days. As soon as she goes, you take that apartment up-stairs. I'm going to redecorate this one. When she gets back, she is going to see a change—a great change. No more Portland cement for mine. I'm going to be a writer. Some writer, too, Jimmy, believe me. If I don't make that collection of new-thoughters look like a bunch of Clown Quinces, my name isn't Bob Campbell. I'll lay out the whole scheme at dinner. Are you with me?"

"With both feet!"

"Then let's go." He seized his coat and hat, and, followed by Griggs, dashed out.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE EPICUREAN.

BETTY CAMPBELL'S visit to her parents in Albany lasted five days, and during that time her husband and Jimmy Griggs were extraordinarily busy. Painters, interior decorators, furnishers, worked in the studio from morning to night. Mr. Campbell saw no one. When the violet-souled poet and his friends stopped in for their afternoon drinks and cigars, they were informed that he was not at home, and went on their way disappointed. Campbell and Griggs, chuckling behind closed doors, confided to each other that Betty, on her return, would see great changes. She did.

It was late on Friday afternoon when she got in, and she did not wire her husband to meet her. The poison of her environment had eaten deep; she had very nearly concluded that it was her duty to herself, to her newly unfettered soul, to break the sordid shackles of domesticity by which she was

bound, and live her own life, "free and untrammelled," as Horace put it. The few days spent in the simple atmosphere of home had somewhat weakened her previous resolutions, but on the train coming down, assisted by a book Mrs. St. Clair had given her, entitled "*Love versus Marriage*," she had succeeded in regaining, as she expressed it, her "point of view."

She hastened to the studio, hoping to reach there in time for an hour's serious thought, before her husband returned from the office. Possibly Horace might drop in; she wanted to talk things over with him. He had written her several burning letters, while she was away, filled with vague allusions to their future together, "wandering hand in hand through life like two simple children, carefree and unafraid."

She felt that Horace should be more explicit. Wandering, in these days of high prices, was apt to be expensive, and if Bob consented to giving her her freedom, she saw no reason why he should pay for it. As for Horace, money seemed not to trouble him at all. In spite of her new ideas, Betty Campbell still retained a practical mind.

She fitted the key in the studio door, full of joy at the thought that she would once more be surrounded by her beloved antiques. When she came in, her first glance about the room proved singularly disappointing. To her eyes, accustomed to the bright light of the street, it seemed but a black and formless cavern. A dim glow at one side attracted her attention. She gave a gasp of dismay.

On the ebony table which had once held her Buddha, now stood a marble bust of what looked like a Greek philosopher. Before it, in place of the incense-burner, glowed a small green lamp. Over the wide studio window hung a curtain of sable, excluding every ray of sunlight. Nothing was visible but the marble bust, weirdly starting in its greenish radiance.

She gave a sudden cry, convinced that by some mistake she had got into the wrong apartment. The curtain before the doorway which faced her was thrust aside, and a shadowy figure came toward her.

"Bob!" she gasped, and sank, helpless, into a chair.

The shadowy figure went to the side of the room and pressed a switch. Instantly the room was bathed in a glow of light, brilliantly, virulently green. Mr. Campbell stood beneath the huge green globe which had replaced the Venetian lantern, wearing a dressing-gown of black velvet. His loose collar was open at the neck. His hair fell in disorder upon his forehead, his face was preternaturally grave.

"Ah—Betty!" he said quietly. "So you are back."

Mrs. Campbell sprang from her chair, striving for words to express her feelings.

"What does all this mean?" She waved a helpless arm about the room. "Are you crazy?"

"Certainly I am not crazy. I have become an Epicurean."

"A—a what?"

"An Epicurean—a follower of the great Epicurus. Since you've been away, Betty, I've been searching my soul, and it tells me that you are right. I have been dull, stupid, commonplace, just as you and your friends said. But at last I have seen the light. In future you shall have no cause to complain. You have preached the beautiful doctrines of freedom—I have chosen for my teacher one who holds that pleasure is the only thing in life worth while, that there is no truth save in sensation, that there are no other laws whatever. Epicurus shall henceforth be my teacher. At last I am really free. No more wasting my time on such stupid things as cement. I have decided to write a book." He went to the desk and fumbled with some sheets of paper upon it.

Betty stared at him with bulging eyes. He seemed quite sane. She scarcely knew what to say.

"Why are you using this—this ridiculous green light?" she demanded.

"It is very simple. Your friend, Mrs. Bacon-Boyle, told me that the color of my aura was green. It is my soul-color. Henceforth, I live, breathe, work, in a green light."

"But—it—it isn't the color of *my* aura."

"In that case, you can, of course, use ordinary light." He manipulated the switch, shutting off the great green globe, and turning on the soft amber wall-brackets. Mrs.



Campbell gave a horrified look about the room.

"But," she almost screamed, "everything is black!"

"Of course. Black has the power of absorbing all colors. I cannot afford to have conflicting, disturbing colors about me when I am at work. These black rugs, curtains, furnishings, absorb all irritating influences. Thus I can write undisturbed, bathed in a flood of green."

"Bob Campbell, I think you have gone mad."

"Not at all, my dear. Mr. Frothingham—Horace, I should say—has repeatedly assured me that he could only work in a violet light. He has one on his desk. Is there any reason why I should not do the same with green?"

"But—Horace is a writer—a poet."

"I, too, am a writer now, Betty." Mr. Campbell took from the desk some sheets of paper. "I am writing a book on the 'Moral Value of Sin.' It is a new thought. Your friends here will recognize it as the newest thought of the day. I expect this book to make a sensation. Listen." He proceeded to read. "Sin, as a moral force, has never been properly appreciated. Without it, there would be no such thing as virtue, no need of preachers, churches, religions, no hereafter, no heaven, no God. Think of it—without sin there could no more be virtue than there could be light without darkness. Is it not a revolutionary thought?"

"Bob!" Mrs. Campbell was speechless.

"You see, my dear, I have adopted the teachings of your friends. I believe in free love, in polygamy, in the joys of sensation, the freedom of the senses, as Epicurus puts it, but such things have heretofore been considered sins. Even your friends, in spite of their theories, have hesitated to practise them. My book will remove every scruple, every doubt. I shall prove to the world that sin is absolutely necessary to the progress of mankind. Then we free-thinkers can do what we please, knowing that we are advancing the cause of humanity. Could anything be more revolutionary?"

He gave her a triumphant smile.

"Are you making fun of me, Bob Camp-

bell?" Betty demanded, her eyes blazing. "You a writer! Nonsense!"

"Not at all. I am fully convinced that some great influence in the cosmic soul—some departed spirit on the other side, is using me as an instrument, to bring truth to the world. The first chapter of my book is finished. It came to me, word for word, as I have written it, through the medium of an ouiga board."

Betty stood staring at him, utterly at a loss for words. The door of the studio opened, and a figure in a dull-red smock came in, waving a huge sheet of paper, on which were written rows of notes of music. It was Jimmy Griggs. He paused at sight of Betty and made a profound bow.

"Mrs. Campbell!" he exclaimed. "This is indeed a pleasure. Welcome home again."

Betty regarded him with an expression of annoyance.

"How do you do, Mr. Griggs," she said.

"Have you become a writer, too?"

"I, a writer? Certainly not. I hope I can express my soul-emotions more subtly. I have always been interested in music, Mrs. Campbell, but under the inspiration of my new surroundings—I moved down here just after you left—I have evolved a new theory of music. You know, of course, that the well-trained musical mind can read notes, themes, even the most complex symphonies, as the ordinary persons would read a printed page. For them, sound is entirely unnecessary. They derive their pleasure from merely reading the written score.

"With this in mind, I have evolved the theory that the music of the future will be soundless. Instead of being performed more or less badly by an orchestra, it will simply be projected on a screen, like moving pictures, thus joining two great arts in one. The imagination of the audience will do the rest. In utter silence they will sit, drinking in the beauty of the printed notes. Don't you think it a magnificent idea?" He beamed at her invitingly.

"I think you have both gone mad," said Betty, turning away.

"Come with me, Robert," said Mr. Griggs, giving his companion a nudge. "I have some kindred spirits in my rooms that I think you should speak with."

"Very well, James. I shall be back presently, Betty." The two men left the room. As they went out they passed Mr. Frothingham in the door.

## CHAPTER VI.

### MR. CAMPBELL EXPLAINS.

**H**ORACE received their greetings in amazed silence. One glance about the transformed studio completed his consternation.

"My God!" he exclaimed, turning to Betty. "What has happened?" He came up to her, took her hands in his. "Cleo—tell me—what does this mean?"

Betty gazed at him with puzzled eyes.

"I don't know, Horace," she said, "unless my husband and Mr. Griggs have lost their minds."

"Then *he* is responsible for all this?" He gazed blankly about the room.

"Yes. He says he has become a—a radical, too. And he's writing a book."

Mr. Frothingham shrugged his shoulders.

"The thing's plain enough," he said. "He is merely trying to win you back by making you and your friends ridiculous. Anybody could see through it."

"If I thought *that*," exclaimed Betty, angrily, "I—I believe I'd leave him."

"That is exactly what you must do, my love. The hour has struck for you and for me. Let us go together—now." He moved toward the door.

"No—not that way. I'd have to tell him."

"Why? It is not important. *We* know."

"Oh—I don't know what to do." Betty sank into a chair. She was on the verge of tears. Horace went to the piano.

"Wait," he said. "I will play for you. Only through music and poetry can the emotions be truly expressed. I will pour out my love to you, win you, sweep away your doubts, with soul harmonies. Listen."

He began to play, first dreamy, sobbing minor chords, then with more and more passion, seeming to speak to her in words of fire. She rose, as though impelled by some outside force, and drew nearer and nearer to the piano.

"My Chopin!" she whispered, her eyes upon his. "You are so wonderful."

"Yes," he replied, rising from the piano, but still keeping his fingers on the keys, playing an impassioned accompaniment. "We are wonderful. We must not hesitate, now. The future belongs to us. Why should we wait, when love calls? To-morrow I will come for you—to-morrow at noon, and we will go out into the world together, just you and I, into the sunlight—free—forever free." He ceased playing and took her two hands in his. "Tell me you will go."

Betty tried to draw away her hands, but the spell of his music, his words, held her fast.

"It seems so—so cruel," she whispered.

"The truth is always cruel. Say you will go."

"Not without telling my husband."

"Very well then. Tell him."

"I will. To-night."

"Dearest! But wait until I have gone." He drew her to him. She was very lovely, in the amber light, and then—her husband was worth at least a quarter of a million. Horace had already satisfied himself on this point. No matter what happened, he was convinced that Campbell would never permit his wife to want.

There would be a divorce, of course, and alimony. Horace thought pleasantly of the alimony. He would have to marry her, no doubt, but then, one must make sacrifices, for the woman one loves. He shrugged his shoulders. Certainly it would be agreeable, to be relieved from the continual grind of poverty, of wondering where he was going to get his next meal.

The profession of a poet left much to be desired, in a financial way, and—Betty was certainly very lovely. He drew her to him, kissed her ardently. The sound of footsteps on the landing caused him to retreat to the safety of the piano stool. Betty went to the door and threw it open.

"Hello!" she exclaimed nervously. "Come in."

Mr. and Mrs. St. Clair, with Clarence Potts and Mrs. Bacon-Boyle, crowded noisily into the studio.

"Welcome home again!" they exclaimed



in chorus. Their exuberance was checked as the astonishing blackness of the room smote them.

"Is anybody dead?" St. Clair asked, gazing about.

"Good Heavens!" cried Mrs. Bacon-Boyle. "I feel as though I were in an Egyptian tomb. My aura is completely swallowed up in the blackness."

"That's just what my husband expected," replied Betty mournfully. "He refuses to have anything about him but green. You told him that was his color, you know."

"Green?" questioned Mrs. Bacon-Boyle. "But I don't see any green."

"You will in a minute." Betty fumbled with the electric switch. In a moment the amber lights were gone, the glow from the huge lamp overhead gave to the entire party the appearance of wax figures.

"Good Lord!" exclaimed St. Clair, shuddering. "You all look as though you'd just been dug up. What's the idea?"

"My husband insists that he must work in a green light."

"Work?" Clarence Potts helped himself to a cigar. "What work?"

"He—he's become a writer."

The whole party began to laugh, but the sudden opening of the studio door stopped them. Bob Campbell came in, very quiet and sedate, followed by Jimmy Griggs. He gazed upon the astonished group with an easy smile.

"Glad to see you all," he said. "How do you like it?" He waved his hand about the room.

"Astonishing!" murmured Mrs. St. Clair. "So original."

"And quaint."

"But what's the big idea?" inquired Mr. Potts, grinning.

"Hasn't my wife told you?" Mr. Campbell went to the desk and began to fumble with the papers upon it.

"I had just begun, Bob," exclaimed Betty, "when you came in."

"It's all very simple," said Mr. Campbell. "I've had a change of heart, that's all. Beginning to see the light. And I want to thank you, one and all, for what you have done to help me."

"What light?" asked St. Clair, gazing at the big green globe.

"The light of truth. I have become a free-thinker, a radical. In fact, I flatter myself that I am more of a radical now than any of you. You preach free love, polygamy, anarchism, theosophy, all the new thought, but you haven't the nerve to practise them. Well, *I have*. I've gone in for the whole works. And I'm writing a book about it. When you read it, you'll see why. It's called 'The Moral Value of Sin.'"

He snatched some pages of manuscript from the desk.

"No one but myself has recognized, until now, that sin is a great moral force—the balance wheel, in fact, of the world. Without it, we would need nothing, not even a God. I am even prepared to go so far as to say that for deliberate, honest, conscientious sinning there will be a reward, hereafter. Listen." He began to read. "Sin and virtue are complements. Neither can exist without the other. It is the man who breaks the moral laws, that renders those laws of value. Without him, they would be as useless as sand in the desert. What use would we have, for laws against sinning, if nobody ever sinned? Let our creed, therefore, be to break, wholeheartedly and without thought of self, but for the good of humanity at large, every law that man has made." He smiled. "What do you think of it?"

"H-m!" remarked St. Clair, nervously. "It sounds logical enough. Where do you propose to begin?"

"Where you, my friend, have left off. I have read your book, 'Polygamy for the Masses,' and it has convinced me that you are right. You argue, indeed, you prove, that polygamy is man's natural and logical state. But you don't practise it."

"How do you know I don't?" asked St. Clair, glancing uneasily at his wife.

"If you do, you are afraid to do so in the open. I am not. I have made up my mind to secure a harem. Your writings on free love, Mrs. St. Clair"—he turned with a smile—"make me think that you might be willing to consider a place in it. If so, the position is open."

"You must be mad!" exclaimed Mrs. St. Clair, with a horrified glance at her husband. "Ashton, I think we had better go."

"Not at all. Don't hurry away, please. I want to tell you about my conversion. Epicurus teaches us that there is but one way to determine the truth—through the senses. I have become an Epicurean."

"I really think we had better be going," muttered Mr. Potts, glancing hastily at his watch.

"Wait. I have much more to tell you. I do not mean to confine my new thought to sex questions alone." He turned to St. Clair. "You, I understand, are a socialist—even an anarchist, if I have understood your attitude correctly."

"I—I am opposed to the existing economic conditions, certainly," St. Clair replied, with a nervous glance at his wife.

"Very well. I have made it my business, during the past week, to go down into the life of the underworld and pick out two deserving members of the submerged tenth—human beings like ourselves, who have been forced by the pressure of society—criminal, thoughtless society—to adopt professions which are a protest against that society's oppressive laws. One of them is known as Dinny the Dope. A picturesque name, is it not? Until recently he has been what is called a second-story man. The other, Stuffy McGinnis, is by profession a burglar. Both have just returned from long stays up the river, where they have been deprived of their liberties by the ruthless power of the law. They are anarchists not only in theory, but in practise. I have invited them here to-night, knowing that you will welcome them with open arms, as comrades in the great cause of freedom—victims of the cruel capitalistic system we all so deeply deplore. Jimmy"—he turned to Mr. Griggs—"will you bring the gentlemen down?"

Griggs went out hastily. He appeared to be struggling with some strong emotion. Mr. Campbell, as soon as the door had closed upon him, turned to Horace.

"You, Mr. Frothingham," he said, pleasantly, "have more than once said that the rich are bloodsuckers, fattening on the unearned increment they wring from the

laboring classes. I have given the matter deep thought, and I have come to the conclusion that you are right. I am not what might be called rich, in these days of swollen fortunes, but by taking from the unfortunates who labor in the dust and grime of a cement factory money which they might otherwise use to buy tires and gasoline for their faithful if inexpensive automobiles I have laid by a considerable sum, in fact, a small fortune. That fortune I have made up my mind to give away."

The little group in the studio regarded Mr. Campbell with bulging eyes. As for Mr. Frothingham, he could scarcely believe what he had heard.

"Give away!" he stammered, regarding Mr. Campbell uncertainly. "Give away!"

"Exactly. Just how I shall manage it I don't know, since divided among the population of this one country alone, each person would receive but three-eighths of a cent, which hardly seems practicable. I must think of some other plan."

"You're surely not in earnest," gasped Mrs. Bacon-Boyle.

"Indeed I am." Mr. Campbell went to the desk, opened one of the drawers and took out a large envelope. "Here, for instance," he said, drawing some official looking documents from the envelope, "is twenty thousand dollars in government bonds—unregistered. I intend to sell them and use the money for the benefit of the down-trodden masses." He replaced the bonds in the envelope and tossed it back into the drawer, which he locked.

"Incredible!" exclaimed Mr. Potts, helping himself surreptitiously to a handful of cigars from the humidor. "Positively incredible. Twenty thousand dollars."

"Just to think, St. Clair," Mr. Campbell continued, taking a book from the table, "I owe all this to you, to an inspiring thought in one of your books, called 'The Crime of Capital.' Listen." He began to read. "'No man can be truly free whose hands are shackled by the power of gold. The first step toward social freedom is the abolition of capital—the destruction of wealth.' A sublime thought. You see, I am at last beginning to understand."

St. Clair shifted uneasily from one foot



to the other. He was plainly nervous. Horace, his hands in his pockets, was gazing, fascinated, at the drawer of the desk. This talk on Mr. Campbell's part of giving away his money affected Mr. Frothingham's plans seriously. If he was in earnest, where was Betty's alimony to come from? Clearly something would have to be done. But what? He glanced at Mrs. Campbell, who was staring in astonishment at her husband, unable to make up her mind whether he was in earnest or not. The question of the money did not concern her so vitally as it did Mr. Frothingham. Betty possessed a small income of her own; she did not intend, should she leave Bob, to accept any money from him.

## CHAPTER VII.

$$20,000 \div 3 =$$

MR. CAMPBELL opened the door in response to Jimmy Griggs's knock, and the two members of the "submerged tenth" came in. Dinny the Dope was tall, lean, slippery of movement. He gave a quick glance about him, as though not quite sure whether to remain or to make a bolt for it. Stuffy McGinnis, his companion, gazed about the room with a stolid smile, his small, furtive eyes darting here and there as he inventoried its contents. Mr. Campbell went through an elaborate series of introductions, which the two crooks acknowledged with awkward bows.

"Pleased to meet yous, one and all," observed Dinny, smiling. Then with an air of importance he took a greasy pack of cards from his pocket, spread them out and presented them to Horace.

"Take one," he said.

Mr. Frothingham drew back in embarrassment.

"What for?" he asked.

"Comrade Dinny wants to show you a little trick," Mr. Campbell laughed. "He's a great hand with the cards."

Horace gingerly took the card that Dinny forced on him.

"Look at it," the latter commanded, "den put it in yer pocket."

Horace, very much bored, glanced at the card, then placed it in the breast pocket of his coat. Dinny continued to smile.

"Got it, have yer?" he asked.

"Certainly," replied Horace. "It's an old trick."

Dinny went up to him, tapped him on the breast. His fingers played about Horace's person for a moment with lightninglike swiftness. Then he stepped back.

"It was de seven of clubs?" he remarked.

"Of course." Horace suppressed a yawn, felt in his pocket for the card. Then an expression of alarm crossed his face.

"I've been robbed!" he shouted.

Dinny, without relaxing his smile, took the card from his own pocket. With it was the poet's wallet.

"Jest to show you de hand is quicker dan de eye," he grinned, presenting Horace with his pocketbook. "Here's yer leather."

Mr. Frothingham placed the wallet nervously in his pocket.

"I've got to be going," he said.

"What's your hurry?" inquired Mr. Campbell pleasantly.

"Important business." He turned to Betty, took her hand in his and pressed it significantly.

"Don't forget," he whispered. "Tomorrow at twelve."

Stuffy McGinnis, as though feeling that something was expected from him, too, in the way of entertainment, solemnly tossed over his head the half-consumed cigar he was smoking, caught it on the sole of his foot and gracefully flipped it back into his mouth. Then he looked about in the manner of one expecting well-merited applause.

"Gentlemen," Mr. Campbell announced, "I know that our comrades here"—he beamed on St. Clair and Potts—"are eager to compare notes with you on the subject of our present economic and social conditions. How would you like to take dinner with us?"

"Lead me to it," grinned Dinny, cracking his finger-joints loudly. It was an accomplishment of which he seemed inordinately proud. Stuffy McGinnis, with a glance at his amazed audience, calmly proceeded to balance on his chin a pair of tall ivory candlesticks he took from the table.

"Me for the eats!" he announced as he returned the candlesticks to the table and bowed elaborately right and left. "Ain't had a decent feed since yestiddy."

Mr. St. Clair and his wife exchanged significant glances.

"I'm terribly afraid, old man," the former began, "that Mrs. St. Clair and I—"

"Nonsense! I insist that you all dine with us. You will have the chance of a lifetime to get some real, first-hand information concerning the condition of the proletariat—"

"What's dat?" asked Dinny. "Wise me up, bo—wise me up."

"The proletariat—the worthy but unfortunate majority who carry on the struggle for the freedom of the masses."

"I'm on." He went up to St. Clair and tapped him on the chest. "When you've done a couple of years in the pen, friend, you'll know what this freedom stuff means."

Mr. St. Clair backed off, feeling for his watch.

"I really must be going," he said.

"Wait a minute, friend," said Dinny, with an ingratiating smile. "Won't some lady or gent lend me a half a dollar?" He held out his hand, and St. Clair dropped a coin into it. Dinny made a few mysterious passes, blew across the palm of his hand, then grinned as he exposed its emptiness. "Jest like dat," he said, "wit'out de aid of a net."

St. Clair nervously mopped his forehead. The situation was growing too much for him.

"Now, if you will let me have my half-dollar—" he said.

"Stuffy, give de gent his four bits," remarked Dinny, turning on his companion. Mr. McGinnis, with ponderous solemnity, spun the coin into the air and caught it, still spinning, upon the back of his hand.

"Sure," he said, presenting it to St. Clair with a low bow.

"I really can't stay!" exclaimed Mrs. Bacon-Boyle, with an appealing glance in the direction of Mr. Potts.

"Wot's yer hurry, kid?" objected Dinny, with his best smile. "De evenin's young yet. You an' me ain't had a chanst to git acquainted. Stick around."

"Clarence," Mrs. Bacon-Boyle's tone showed her horror, "take me away." She went to the door.

"Before you go, I simply insist that you all come up and see my studio!" exclaimed Mr. Griggs. "Had the whole thing done over. Camouflage. Everything melts into the background. Great idea, don't you think? Suppress the furniture, so as to give my personality a chance to stand out. I particularly want your opinion of it, Clarence."

Mr. Potts and the others seized upon the opportunity thus afforded them to escape. Mr. Campbell, going out with them, paused at the door.

"Coming, Betty?" he asked.

"No. I think not." She gazed uncertainly at the two crooks.

"Just as you like," her husband returned pleasantly. "I won't be gone long." He turned to Dinny and his companion. "Wait here for me, boys. And make yourselves comfortable." He waved his hand toward the corner of the room. "Drinks and cigars on me, you know."

The two needed no second invitation. They made a dive for the cellaret. Betty took one look and fled.

"Say, Stuff," asked Dinny, over his highball, "wot sort of a dump is dis?"

"Soich me." He gazed about the room. "They's all nuts, I guess. Wot didja git off'n de tall guy wit' de poiple necktie."

"Two jitneys, a bum quarter, and five pawn-tickets." He took the articles in question from his pocket and gazed at them in disgust. "Take it from me, dere ain't de price of a feed in de whole joint."

Stuffy began to examine the bits of antique porcelain, ivory, and silverware which decorated the top of the book-rack.

"Hully chee!" he muttered, as he discarded piece after piece. "And to t'ink dere's guys wot pays real money for such junk!" He bit a tiny figurine, a rare example of East Indian workmanship, with his teeth. "Pure brass!" he exclaimed, replacing it on the bookcase. "Say! What did yer want to git me up here fer, anyway? Me fer a scuttle of suds!"

"Ca'm yerself, Stuff—ca'm yerself. We gotta stay right here till de big guy gits



back. Don't fergit—de eats is on him." He went up to the picture by Clarence Potts representing the thin lady taking a bath. "Now what d' yer t'ink of dat?"

Stuffy followed his gaze.

"It ain't respectable, Dinny. De whole joint ain't respectable. Dem guys makes me noivous. First thing yer know, dey'll be pullin' something raw on us. Dat one wit' de poiple tie don't look right to me."

"Did yer pipe de dame wit' de phony joolry. Some queen."

"De one in dere"—Stuffy nodded toward the door through which Betty had disappeared—"kin have my money. She's regular." He helped himself to a cigar, and was about to light it when there came a faint knocking at the door. Dinny motioned to him, and the two hastily hid behind the curtains which shrouded the big studio window. The knocking was repeated. Betty, very charming in an embroidered kimono, came into the room and opened the door. Horace, somewhat agitated, stood on the threshold.

"I—I just had to come back," he whispered, taking her hands in his. "I—we had better change our plans."

Betty glanced nervously about the room.

"Be careful, Horrie," she said.

"Where's your husband?"

"Up-stairs—with Mr. Griggs. He left those awful men here, but they must have gone." Again she glanced about.

"I think," said Horace, in some agitation, "that we had better go to-night, instead of to-morrow. Can you be ready by ten o'clock?"

"Oh, Horrie, I—I don't know what to say! I suppose I can."

"Very well. Tell your husband everything, frankly, as soon as he gets back. And now, go in and pack."

"Are you going to wait?" Betty asked, from the door.

"No. I don't think it better for me to be here when you tell him. We don't know just how he will take it. I'll come back. You'd better hurry, now." He urged her through the curtained doorway and watched the velvet folds close behind her with a look of determination. As soon as he was alone he sprang to the desk and, taking a

heavy brass paper-knife from it, forced open the drawer in which Mr. Campbell had placed the bonds. The operation required but a few seconds. He smiled with satisfaction as he took out the long envelope and examined its contents.

There was a quiver of the curtain, but Horace was too busy to observe it, or to see Dinny and his companion as they slipped from behind its protecting folds and stepped up beside him.

"Twenty thousand!" he whispered to himself, replacing the bonds in the envelope and thrusting it into his pocket.

"Divided by three," remarked Dinny pleasantly, over his shoulder.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### A DESPERATE SITUATION.

THE astounded poet wheeled about with a gasp of dismay, to find two smiling faces gazing into his.

"God!" he whispered, with a quick glance at the door.

"Neat little job yer done, bo," remarked Stuffy, lighting his cigar. "Couldn't 'a' done it better myself."

"What are you talking about?" demanded Horace, edging away.

Stuffy glanced at the partly open drawer.

"And to t'ink," he continued mournfully, "dat de stuff was dere all de time, an' we never got wise. Mitt me, Horace—mitt me. I t'ought yer was a boob, but de joke's on me."

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" asked Mr. Frothingham defiantly.

"Do about it? Say!" Mr. McGinnis turned to his companion. "What are we goin' to do about it, Dinny?"

"Hadn't we better sit down somewhere and talk it over, friend? I can't divide twenty thousand by three in me head."

Horace glanced at the door through which Betty had gone. He was beginning to feel extremely nervous.

"We can't talk here," he whispered. "Meet me at the saloon on the corner in—in half an hour."

Dinny and his companion smiled broadly.

"Why not make it now?" the former asked. "Any objection to our leavin' together?"

"I—I can't go just yet."

"Well, we ain't in no hurry, are we, Stuff?" He sat down in one of Betty's big chairs. "Got de whole evenin' before us."

Stuffy helped himself to another drink, his eye on the door.

"Sure we has, an' then some."

Horace realized that he faced a desperate situation. If Mr. Campbell returned, as he might do at any moment, and found him there, how could he explain his presence? Then, too, the loss of the bonds might be discovered. It was imperative that he should in some way get rid of Dinny and his companion.

"Suppose I give you each a thousand," he whispered—"will you go?"

Dinny regarded him with a disgusted smile.

"Say, bo," he replied, "do I really look as easy at dat?"

"Two, then."

Dinny crossed his legs with a satisfied smile.

"Seein' as how you're gettin' the goil," he said, "why shouldn't we get ten thousand each?"

"And leave me nothing?"

"What do you expect? The whole works?"

Horace felt the package of bonds in his pocket. Without it he knew he would be powerless. Yet how could he get away, with these men on his trail? He went toward the door, but Mr. McGinnis intercepted him.

"Hold on, bo!" he said. "You gotta stay right here."

Horace was ready to fight. He moved toward his tormentors, his fists clenched. Then, to his consternation, there came sounds of footsteps outside the studio door. A moment later it was opened by Mr. Campbell.

He came in, followed by Miss Brent and Jimmy Griggs.

"Ah, Horace!" he remarked, with a genial smile. "Glad to see you. Dinny"—he turned to the two crooks—"here's ten

dollars. You and Stuffy had better go and get yourselves something to eat."

"Does yer want us to come back?"

"Yes. Meet me here after dinner. There's something I want to talk over with you."

Dinny turned to Mr. Frothingham with a peculiar smile.

"We'll wait fer youse on de corner," he whispered. Then, taking Mr. McGinnis by the arm, he went out.

Mr. Campbell went to the table and helped himself to a cigar.

"Anything I can do for you, Horace?" he asked.

"No," replied the poet, trying to conceal his embarrassment. He was afraid to stay, and equally afraid to go. Visions of Stuffy and his companion waiting for him on the sidewalk below chilled him. No less disturbing was the thought that Mr. Campbell might in some way discover the loss of the bonds.

"Waiting for any one?" the latter asked pleasantly.

"N-no," Horace managed to stammer.

"Ah! I thought you might, perhaps, be going to take my wife to dinner."

Mr. Frothingham grasped at the suggestion as a drowning man might grasp at a straw. It was true that he had no money with him; but, then, Betty might have some. The two crooks, waiting for him below, would hardly dare approach him as long as he had a lady with him. Then he remembered that Betty was to tell her husband of their proposed bolt at once. It would never do for him to be present. There was no telling what Mr. Campbell might do. There was clearly nothing for him to do but to face the music—meet Dinny and his companion on the sidewalk, and share the bonds with them as the price of their silence.

"I'm sorry I can't do as you suggest," he said, "but I have some very important matters to attend to. I'm leaving the city to-night."

"Really?"

"Yes. I may be gone for a very long time."

"Indeed." Mr. Campbell beamed on him. "Where are you going?"



"Why—I—don't know," Horace stammered.

"Thought you might be going to the Orient."

"The Orient?"

"Yes. You've always said you wanted to go to the East, haven't you?" asked Mr. Campbell.

"Yes. To India, perhaps. There is no reason why you should not know. Betty—your wife—will explain. Excuse me, now. I'm in something of a hurry." He hastily left the room.

Mr. Campbell continued to smile. He even hummed softly to himself, and going over to the desk, closed one of the drawers which was standing slightly open.

"Excuse me a few moments, Jimmy, won't you?" he said to Mr. Griggs. "I want to have a talk with Betty."

Horace, cautiously descending the steps, peered around the corner of the doorway. To his surprise and relief, Dinny and his companion were not in sight. Were they hiding in some dark alley, waiting to spring out on him as he passed? He hastily crossed the street and set out in the direction of his room. He had many things to attend to: his grip to pack; money to be raised, enough at least to get Betty and himself out of town; dinner to be eaten; railroad tickets to be purchased and trains to be looked up.

By going as far as Philadelphia, it would be readily possible to dispose of the bonds there in the morning. They were unregistered, and hence could not be traced. Then, with an ample supply of money at his command, the trip to India, or wherever else he and Betty might decide to go, could easily be arranged. He anticipated no trouble from Mr. Campbell. Even should he discover the loss of the bonds, the two crooks were the persons upon whom suspicion would naturally fall; and, in any event, Horace felt sure that Betty's husband cared for her too deeply to allow any open scandal to wreck her life.

He reached his room, began to throw his belongings into a suit-case. On the sidewalk below two silent figures lounged. One of them, tall and thin, bore a remarkable resemblance to Dinny the Dope. The oth-

er, by the way he chewed on his cigar, strikingly suggested his friend, Stuffy McGinnis.

## CHAPTER IX.

### BETTY BREAKS THE NEWS.

BACK in the studio, Jimmy Griggs was regarding Jean Brent with unconcealed admiration. He had, in fact, been so regarding her ever since the day they met. During Betty Campbell's absence in Albany, Jimmy had taken Miss Brent to dinner every night. His admiration had increased steadily with each successive dinner. He found difficulty in restraining it. When Bob Campbell left the room, Mr. Griggs gave a sigh of relief.

"Miss Brent—Jean," he exclaimed—"I'm so glad you came! There's something I want to say to you—" he stammered, paused.

"Then why on earth don't you say it?" Jean laughed, looking at him curiously.

"Will you—will you—g-go to dinner with me?"

The girl burst into peals of laughter.

"Oh, Jimmy," she cried, "you're *so* funny! I thought you were going to say something original. Haven't I already dined with you six nights in succession?"

"I—I'd like it better if I knew that you were going to dine with me—always." He tried to take her hand.

"What is this?" Miss Brent asked, drawing it coolly away. "A proposition to supply me with table d'hôte dinners for the rest of my life?"

"Exactly. And lunches and breakfasts as well, to say nothing of lodging and—"

"Jimmy—Jimmy," she interrupted, laughing, "doesn't that sound terribly immoral?"

"Heavens, no! I want you to marry me."

"Marry you? Why on earth should I?"

"I—really I don't know, unless you just happened to—to like me well enough."

"I haven't time to think of getting married. My life is devoted to my career."

"What's the matter with trying both? I'll help you."

"No use, Jimmy. I must be free."

"But—don't you care for me?"

"I—I certainly like you a lot. More than any man I know."

"Then let's try it for a while, anyway. It might take; you can't tell."

"I really don't see what use you would be to me. You could give me a home, but I hate homes. That's why I left one and came here to New York. And I don't intend to have any children, so you wouldn't be of any use to me that way. About all you could do would be to take me to dinner occasionally—"

"Then why not now?" He rose and took up his hat. "We'll go to the Dutch Pig. I'm even willing to eat the kind of food they have down here, in order to be with you. Come along."

Miss Brent glanced toward the velvet curtain.

"I *did* want to see Betty," she said, hesitating.

"See her after dinner. She's busy now. Back after a while, Bob!" he called to Mr. Campbell as the latter came into the room.

Mr. Campbell seated himself at his desk and busied himself with his manuscripts. He seemed preoccupied, ill at ease. It was at least ten minutes before Betty joined him. There was a look of resolution on her face.

"Bob," she announced solemnly, "I want to talk to you."

"Yes?" He laid aside his pen and glanced up.

Betty met his gaze without flinching.

"The time has come, Bob, for us to be honest with each other. I am not happy with you. I have made up my mind to leave you."

Whatever emotions this astonishing statement caused in Mr. Campbell's breast, his features did not betray them.

"I'm sorry, Betty," was all he said.

"You have never understood me," she went on. "You don't like the things I do. Even this interest you are now showing in the new thought isn't honest. You don't really mean it. Your idea of a wife is a sort of high-class housekeeper and cook. I can't live that sort of a life any longer. I must be free—to live, to love, as I see fit.

I have at last found a man who understands me."

"You mean—Horace?"

"Yes. He brings out the best there is in me. Together, we shall do great things. We are going away."

Mr. Campbell chewed the end of his pen reflectively, but otherwise exhibited no astonishment. Betty, anticipating an explosion, seemed rather annoyed that he took the matter so calmly.

"Really," he said. "That is certainly very interesting. Where do you propose to go?"

"What does it matter, so long as I leave here? I hope you will take things quietly, Bob. I'm in earnest."

Mr. Campbell rose. His face was very grave.

"Very well, Betty," he said. "I *will* take things quietly. If you want Mr. Frothingham, you shall have him. I won't stand in your way. Of course, I'm sorry to see you go, but your happiness is more important to me even than my own. I hope Horace is able to support you."

Betty did not reply directly to this. She was not entirely sure herself.

"I don't doubt we'll get along," she said. "Money isn't everything."

"Very well. I wish you all the happiness in the world. When are you going?"

"To—to-night," Betty stammered. "You don't seem to care very much."

"What can I do? You say you have made up your mind. Nothing that I can say would change it. You can depend on me to do all in my power to make things as easy for you as possible."

"Horace is my—my superman," Betty declared, as though to justify herself. "We will work together, write together, do things that will startle the world."

"I hope you do. Of course, I don't mind telling you, Betty, that Mr. Frothingham isn't exactly the sort of man I'd have picked out for you, but you may know him better than I do. I hope so, I'm sure. If you like, I'll see you to the station."

"Bob! How can you be so cold-blooded? You never did care for me. If you had, you couldn't take things the way you do. Any one might think you were glad



to get rid of me. Don't you expect to be lonely?"

"Certainly not. I've made all necessary provisions for that." He went over to the steam-pipe that led through one corner of the room to the apartment above, and hammered on it with a brass paper-knife. "You see, Betty, I've gone in for all the new thought, including polygamy. Instead of one wife, I shall have seven, one for each day in the week. I've already made my selection, and I want you to tell me what you think of them." He went to the door of the studio and threw it open. Seven young women filed in. They were all of them extremely good-looking. "Ladies—my former wife. Betty, your successors. Aren't they charming?"

Betty took one look at the new arrivals, essayed to speak, then, with quivering lips, fled from the room.

## CHAPTER X.

### PRE-ADAMITE.

**I**T was a quarter to ten when Jean Brent got back to the studio. She and Jimmy had had a delightful dinner. He had spent over two hours telling her why she ought to marry him, and his eloquence had not been without effect. At last, to escape him, Jean forced him to bring her back to see Betty Campbell. She liked Betty. It would do no harm to talk the matter over with her.

She was so full of her own subject that she did not notice Betty's traveling dress, nor the extreme nervousness with which the latter greeted her.

"Mr. Griggs has asked me to marry him!" she burst out. "But I don't see how I am going to do it without sacrificing my career. And I want to."

"What—sacrifice your career?" Betty asked, sinking dejectedly into the nearest chair.

"Of course not. I mean I want to marry him. I love him."

"I can't advise you," Betty said. "Life is so complex. Love and marriage, I've found out, are two very different things."

"Well, you're in love with Horace, aren't

you? And you'd marry him if you were free, wouldn't you?"

Betty nodded.

"I suppose I would," she replied.

"Then I don't see why I shouldn't marry Jimmy," said Jean, triumphantly. "I think he needs some one to look after him. Clarence Potts tells me he's got his studio upstairs filled with the best-looking women—"

"Oh, you needn't worry about them," groaned Betty. "They're my husband's harem."

"Harem! Betty! What on earth are you talking about?"

"It's true. Ashton St. Clair has been preaching polygamy to him for weeks, and now, he's made up his mind to practise it. I've seen them. They're terribly good looking."

"And you're going to *let* him?"

"How can I stop it? Haven't I been saying all along that everybody should be free, to live their lives in their own way?"

"But—Betty! A harem!"

"Exactly. Seven of them. One for each day in the week."

"Heavens! Your husband is an optimist, isn't he? Still, I don't see what right *you* have to complain. You're in love with Horace, you say."

"Y—yes. I suppose you're right. But I don't like it, just the same."

"Betty, you surprise me. I thought you were crazy about Horace. All the women are. He plays divinely. And writes such lovely verses. I never told you, did I, that he gave me an awful rush when I first met him. We wrote a poem together. That is, he really wrote it. I just inspired him. I thought it was wonderful. Used to sleep with it under my pillow, at first. Let me see, I believe I've got it in my bag yet."

She fumbled about in her hand-bag, quite oblivious of Mrs. Campbell's look of amazement.

"Oh, here it is." She began to read. "Vast utterness. Utter vastness. Sublimated voids, ultraviolet. Imponderable"—she got no further. Betty snatched the sheet of paper from her and began to devour it with greedy eyes.

"He—he wrote this to you?" she gasped.

"Why—yes—but I hope you won't be

jealous. It was at least three months ago. Long before he met you." She reached over and took the poem from Betty's nerveless fingers. "I'm terribly sorry I spoke of it."

Betty rose. The expression on her face was not a pleasant one.

"I think I had better finish my packing," she said.

"Packing? What for. You aren't going away *again*?"

"Yes. Horace is to be here at ten o'clock. It's almost that now."

"Horace?" Jean's face grew serious. "What's Horace got to do with your going away?"

"Everything. He's going with me."

"Betty Campbell! You don't mean it!" Jean sprang from her chair, her eyes wide with amazement, horror. "Where—where are you going?"

"I think I shall go to—to Albany."

"Albany! Isn't that where your people live?"

"Certainly. That's why I'm going there. Until the divorce is settled."

"Oh! I see." Jean looked if anything more mystified than ever. "Then it isn't to be a—a regular bolt. Does Horace know?"

"Not yet. Why?"

"Nothing—nothing. It's none of my affair, of course. Only from something he said, I thought he was planning a trip to India. He's crazy about the East, you know. Wanted me to go to Japan with him."

Betty turned away. For the first time, doubts of Horace, of his sincerity, began to creep into her mind. Was he, after all, she wondered, quite what she thought him to be? Of course it was not of vital importance that he had deceived her about the poem; the artistic temperament was prone to such littlenesses. As for his having made love to Jean Brent, that was nothing. All men had their affairs of the heart; it was enough that she believed she was the big love of Horace's life. In any event, she determined to leave Bob. What she might do after that, as far as Horace was concerned, the future would have to decide.

"You'll excuse me, Jean, won't you?" she said. "I've got an awful lot to do."

"Of course, dear. Can't I help you?"

Betty shook her head.

"Here comes Bob," she said. "You might talk to him, while I'm packing. It's rather awkward, having him about."

Mr. Campbell came into the room carrying in his hands a large bearskin rug. Going to the mirror at the other side of the room he began to drape the rug about him, moving this way and that with an air of entire satisfaction. Betty and Jean watched him in amazement.

"Hello, Jean!" he said. "It isn't quite large enough, is it?"

"Large enough for what?" replied Miss Brent, completely mystified.

Mr. Campbell tossed the rug over the back of a chair.

"For a robe, of course," he said. "I'm thinking about wearing it."

"Wearing it? What for?"

"I'll tell you. Do you know what a pre-Adamite is?"

"Why, no—not exactly. Something about living close to nature, isn't it?"

"Rather. I met a man at dinner to-night who gave me the whole dope. Convinced me that we are all living our lives wrongly. As a result of my talk with him I have become a Primitive—a pre-Adamite. Cave-man stuff and all that. One of the very newest thoughts going." He again began to drape the bearskin about him, in the manner of a Roman toga. "Nifty little costume, eh, what?" He regarded Miss Brent and his wife with a pleased smile.

Betty made no attempt to conceal her annoyance.

"Now you're positively ridiculous," she snapped.

"Do you mean to say you're thinking of going about in a thing like that?" Jean asked.

"Certainly. Going back to nature. Physical perfection is my goal. I shall spend the next four weeks wandering through the Maine woods, wearing this bearskin, living on raw flesh, berries, nuts. Great idea, don't you think?" He beamed upon them, in the manner of a man thoroughly pleased with himself. "I shall take nothing with me but my bare hands, and this skin. After all, clothes are only a convention. In the



sickening and debilitating atmosphere of our modern overheated rooms, we live an unnatural life. It would be infinitely better, were we all to go about as nature intended us to. Don't you think so?" He appealed to Miss Brent. "I've half a mind to try it right now." Snatching up the bearskin, he started toward the door.

Jean gave an exclamation of dismay. Mr. Campbell laughed.

"You are, after all, none of you really radicals," he said. "You pretend to be unconventional, but you're not. Modesty is nothing but an artificial convention. There isn't the least reason why we shouldn't all of us go about naked. The ancient Greeks—"

"Are you planning to take your harem into the Maine woods with you?" asked Betty, with biting sarcasm.

"No." But it is on their account that I have decided to go—to achieve physical perfection. I feel that my—er—responsibilities, as it were, have been somewhat increased. I must be prepared to shoulder them." He began to go through a series of exercises. "Sitting over a desk, thinking of nothing but cement, has made an old man of me. Thank God! I am free at last—free to live, to grow—to expand." He took a deep breath. Betty gazed at him in anger.

"You're making an awful fool of yourself," she said.

"I don't see why," her husband retorted, with an injured look. "You wanted me to go in for new thought—you said I was dull, stupid, unprogressive. Now, when I take up all the latest things, you get angry about it. That fellow I was talking to to-night spent a month in the Maine woods last winter. Why shouldn't I? He said he came back feeling better than he ever felt in his life."

A violent rapping on the studio door interrupted him. Betty, thinking that Horace might have arrived, hastened to open it. Jimmy Griggs came in, waving his arms about excitedly.

"I've just struck a new idea! Immense!" He gazed at them with a smile of delight. "Instead of projecting my soundless music on the screen by means of printed notes,

I shall use colors. Every musical tone has a color. My soundless symphonies shall be nothing but glorious waves of blue, green, violet, yellow, red. Roaring riots of color. Futuristic! Well, rather! What do you think of it?"

"You're just as big a fool as Bob," Betty remarked, turning away angrily. "Come along, Jean. You can help me finish my packing." She left the room, followed by Miss Brent.

## CHAPTER XI.

### FROM BOHEMIA TO—

**W**HEN they had gone, Jimmy went over and put his hand on Bob Campbell's shoulder.

"Well, old man," he asked earnestly, "how's everything?"

Mr. Campbell gazed anxiously at the door through which Miss Brent and his wife had disappeared. The look of satisfaction on his face had fled. He seemed anxious, worried.

"I don't know, Jimmy," he said in a tired voice. "I'm afraid it hasn't worked."

"You don't mean to say she's really going?"

Mr. Campbell nodded.

"Looks like it," he replied. "And if she does, it will break my heart."

"Buck up, Bob!" Mr. Griggs slapped his companion smartly on the back. "Never say die, you know. Everything 'll come out all right."

"I hope so." He glanced ruefully at the bearskin. "I'm tired of this foolishness. Can't stand it much longer. Wonder how I'd look in this thing." He draped the rug about him. "If only the president of the Standard Cement Company could see me now!"

Jimmy burst out laughing.

"Some little costume!" he said. "How did the pre-Adamite idea strike her?"

"She was furious. You know, Jimmy, Betty isn't a new woman at all. She was much happier in Flatbush. But she's as obstinate as a mule. When she makes up her mind to do a thing, you can't change her. She thinks it's her duty to leave me,

and she's going to do it. That purple poet has filled her up with talk about the great work she's going to do, until she imagines she's in love with him. Damned rotter! I'd like to wring his neck."

"Why don't you?"

"Because if I did, Betty would think twice as much of him as she does now. That's the way with women. No—she's got to find out the sort of a chap he is, herself. And the tragedy of it is that she may not find it out until too late." He took a cigar from the humidor and gazed moodily at it. "I'm not much given to sentiment, Jimmy. Nothing flowery about me. Just a plain, ordinary bonehead, I guess, as Horace says. But I love Betty, and I'd give my life, any day in the year, to make her happy. Any day, God bless her!"

"I know you would, Bob. And I can't understand why she doesn't know it, too."

"When she came to me to-night, and told me she was going to leave me, I felt just like taking her in my arms and holding her there, against Horace or anybody else in the world. And what did I do? Told her I'd help her all I could. Hell!"

He began to stride up and down the room.

"I feel just the same way about Jean," said Mr. Griggs. "Asked her to marry me to-night."

"Did she accept?"

"No. Said I would interfere with her career."

Mr. Campbell groaned.

"Career!" he exclaimed, his voice trembling with anger. "That's what Betty wants, too. And neither of them have anything to offer the world that it wouldn't be better off without. Betty can write schoolgirl verses—Jean has a third-rate voice. Flattery has made them both think they're great artists. I tell you, Jimmy, the man who fills a woman up with that sort of poison is doing her as much harm as if he inoculated her with the 'flu.' More, in fact. You can get over the flu. Look at Betty. If she's mad enough to run off with this poet, he'll leave her, inside of a year, and then where will she be? In the gutter! Think of it, man. My wife in the gutter. Damn it all—I'd like to—"

A gentle knock at the door interrupted him. Mr. Griggs threw it open. Horace Frothingham, suit-case in hand, came into the room. He was exceedingly nervous, ill at ease.

"I—I had hoped you would be out," he said, glancing in some confusion at Mr. Campbell.

"Why?"

The poet's confusion sensibly increased. He placed his suit-case on the floor, and glanced toward the opposite doorway.

"Didn't Cleo—er—Mrs.—er—Campbell—tell you?"

Mr. Campbell managed to smile, but the look in his eyes was not a pleasant one.

"My dear Frothingham—Horace, I may say—don't forget that my wife's affairs are still of the greatest importance to me. Naturally I want to be here to see her off—wish her *bon voyage*, as it were. Did I understand you to say you were going to India?"

"I—er—it isn't definitely decided. Mrs.—er—Campbell will of course have to be—er—consulted."

"Of course. Very considerate of you, I'm sure. You have plenty of funds, I hope."

Mr. Frothingham's face became suddenly ashen. He fumbled uneasily with a cigarette.

"I—I—we shall make out," he said. "Some friends have been kind enough"—he paused.

"That's fine." Mr. Campbell rubbed his hands together in a manner expressive of his entire satisfaction. "You'll pardon me if I speak of it," he went on, smiling agreeably, "but about that sixty dollars you owe me—"

"I—I'll send it to you—to-morrow. I—er—don't happen to have the amount with me at the moment."

"Really. You surprise me, Horace. A man setting out for India, it seems to me, should be better prepared. I sincerely hope you will not allow Mrs. Campbell to suffer in any way—"

Mr. Frothingham frowned, but made no reply.

"Traveling in these days," continued Mr. Campbell suavely, "is frightfully expensive. I understand that you expect to be away



a year, at least. If you support my wife in the manner to which she has been accustomed, I should say you would need at least twenty thousand—”

“I can manage my own affairs better than you!” exclaimed the poet with a snarl of rage.

“Exactly. I have no wish to interfere. But it is only natural that I should feel a deep interest. I am sure you would feel the same way in my place. Betty is, after all, my wife, you know. I have been looking after her for a number of years. Such things become, in time, matters of habit. You’ll excuse me, won’t you?”

“Is Mrs. Campbell ready?” demanded the poet. “I’m in a hurry.”

“I’ll see. Meanwhile, sit down and have a cigar. Jimmy”—he said a few words in a low voice to Griggs, and the latter went out. “You’ll find some excellent ones there—in the humidor.” With a queer smile he went to the door at the other side of the room and thrust aside the curtain. “Betty,” he called. “Some one to see you.”

Betty Campbell came out at once, looking very smart in her traveling-suit of gray. She greeted Horace with a tired smile.

“Oh—it’s you,” she said.

Mr. Frothingham glanced impatiently at the clock.

“It’s after ten, Cleo,” he remarked irritably. “Aren’t you ready?”

“Not quite. Jean is finishing my satchel for me. I—I don’t feel very well, so I asked her to help.” She glanced anxiously from Horace to her husband.

A tremendous din suddenly resounded outside the door. With a look of surprise, Mr. Campbell threw it open. Ashton St. Clair stood on the threshold, blowing vociferously upon a small tin horn. Behind him crowded Helen Duncan, Mrs. Bacon-Boyle, Mr. Potts, Mr. Tomlinson and several others, all in masquerade costume. In their hands they carried absurd gifts, animals made of *papier mâché*, toy automobiles, other extravagancies.

Mr. St. Clair, bearing a huge bunch of celery-tops, bound with violet ribbon, advanced toward Betty and began a heavily humorous speech. It was a relief, he declared, to find a husband and wife so ultra-

modern that they could leave each other pleasantly and amicably, without the usual sordid recriminations. He proposed three cheers for Betty, for Horace, for Mr. Campbell. It was a triumph of the new thought.

The cheers were given with a will, accompanied by the throwing of confetti. Mr. Tomlinson began to play the “Wedding March” violently upon the piano.

The gaiety of the new arrivals seemed lost upon the little group in the studio. Mr. Campbell was unusually grave. Betty was scarcely able to keep back her tears. As for Horace, his face was livid. He took up his suit-case with a growl of rage.

“I say,” he cried, turning to Betty, “isn’t that grip of yours ready yet? If we don’t look out we’ll miss our train. You can have anything you need sent on later. Let’s hurry. I’ve got a taxi waiting downstairs.”

Betty glanced toward the bedroom door.

“Jean,” she called, weakly. Her courage was fast failing her.

“All ready, dear.” Miss Brent entered, carrying Betty’s coat and grip. “I’ll carry them down to the cab for you, dear.”

Horace gave a quick look about. Mr. Campbell was regarding him with an inscrutable smile.

“Good-by, everybody,” he said, and threw open the door.

He did not, however, go out. On the contrary he shrank back into the room, a look of terror on his face. In the doorway stood Dinny the Dope and Stuffy McGinnis, smiling pleasantly, even deprecatingly, as though to indicate their regret at interrupting so joyous a gathering. Behind them appeared the smiling countenance of Mr. Griggs.

“What do you want here?” demanded Horace, his face very white. “Let me pass.”

Dinny removed the cigar from his mouth and regarded the poet with an indulgent smile.

“Ain’t youse forgot dat little matter of business we had wit youse?” he asked.

“I told you I’d meet you at eleven o’clock and arrange everything,” Horace muttered. “Go away, please. Can’t you see you’re interrupting?”

"Said he'd meet us at eleven o'clock, didn't he, Stuff?" Dinny nudged his companion violently in the ribs with his elbow. His voice was smooth as oil.

"Sure he did," replied Mr. McGinnis, idly balancing his cigar on the back of his hand. "Eleven o'clock, he said, and den went and bought tickets fer a train wot leaves at ten thoity. Sure he did."

"So we t'ought we'd better come up and settle matters right here," Dinny added.

Horace looked at the two men in utter amazement. If they expected to share with him the proceeds of his theft, what idiocy, to speak of the matter now, before Mr. Campbell! He felt his brain beginning to reel.

"Go down to the cab," he muttered. "I'll settle matters with you there."

Dinny slowly shook his head.

"Nothin' doin'," he remarked. "You gotta come across right now."

"Now?" Horace wiped the beads of perspiration from his brow. "What's the matter with you?" he added, in a whisper. "Do you want to give everything away?"

By way of reply the two men stepped into the room, closing the door after them. Their manner underwent a subtle change. Before the astonished party in the studio realized what they were about, Mr. McGinnis had seized Horace tightly by the arms, while Dinny the Dope had wrenched the suit-case from his hands, in spite of his furious struggles. Opening the case, Dinny emptied its contents upon the floor, extracted from them a large blue envelope, and handed it to Mr. Campbell.

"Here you are, sir," he said, in a brisk, businesslike voice. "Guess we'd better take him right along." He turned to his companion.

A profound and significant silence had fallen upon the party. Every one turned to Mr. Campbell, who stood regarding them with rather an unhappy smile. His eyes sought Betty's, he seemed ill at ease.

"Bob! What does this mean?" she gasped.

Her husband went toward her. When he spoke, there was a note of pity, almost of regret, in his voice.

"Mr. Frothingham took the twenty thou-

sand dollars' worth of bonds I left in the desk," he said, apologetically.

"It's a lie!" screamed the poet, making violent signs to Dinny and his companion. "The bonds are mine. They are unregistered. You can't prove anything." He faced Mr. Campbell angrily.

"Oh, yes, I can. You see, I put them there, expecting that you would take them, and these gentlemen"—indicating Dinny and his companion—"saw you do it."

"Those crooks! Nobody would take their word."

"They're not crooks, Horace. As a matter of fact, they're from a private detective-agency. You see, even if I am a bonehead, I do have a clever idea, occasionally." He turned to Betty. "I'm sorry, dear, but there was no other way."

One of the detectives said a few words to his companion, and Horace, struggling violently, was led out. Betty sank into a chair, her hands to her face. Through her fingers trickled tears of mortification and grief. The silence in the room became ghastly. St. Clair came to the rescue.

"Good night, everybody," he said. "We've got to get along. Masked ball at the Liberal Arts Club, you know. All aboard." He began to toot his horn as he reached the door, and the others followed him in mute embarrassment. Only Betty and her husband, Jean Brent and Mr. Griggs remained in the room. Jean ran to Betty and kissed her.

"Don't cry, dear," she said. "Everything's all right. Horace always was a rotter. Jimmy"—she turned swiftly to Mr. Griggs—"take me up to your studio. There's something I want to say to you." She gave him a hopeful smile.

Mr. Griggs was at her side at once. He, too, was smiling.

"You dear!" he whispered, taking her hand in his. Then he turned to Mr. Campbell. "Good night, Bob," he said. "Everything's all right." He nodded significantly toward Betty, her face buried in a mass of pillows, then took Miss Brent by the arm and hurried her from the room. Mr. Campbell turned slowly to his wife.

"I'm terribly sorry, Betty," he said, regarding her with troubled eyes. "I wouldn't



have had this happen for anything, but there was no way out of it. If you still want to leave me, I won't stop you, but I couldn't let you throw yourself away on a man like that. Do you want to go, Betty?"

Mrs. Campbell sat up. There was a curious expression upon her tear-stained face.

"Yes," she said. "I don't like it here any more."

"Very well." Mr. Campbell walked over to the table, and began to fumble with the cigar-humidor. His face, turned from her,

was deeply troubled. "Where do you want to go?" he asked. "To your mother's?"

"No." She came up behind him, her eyes very bright. "I want to go back to—Flatbush."

Mr. Campbell wheeled upon his heels, unable to conceal his sudden astonishment and joy.

"And I want you to go with me," she went on.

"Betty!" he cried, and held out his arms to her.

(The end.)

# Welcome to Our City



by Samuel G. Camp

"JIM," says the missus, "I wisht you'd try and break into the golf club."

"Well," I says, "what with all them well-to-do millionaires that belongs to it I wouldn't be surprised if there might be some pickin's in the locker-room or somewhere. I wonder—now—is there a moon to-night?"

Now just because a man is makin' money hand over fist is no reason why you should spend it like water; you know that as well as I. But you got to show the missus. And I'll say if you can do that little thing—well, believe me, as the poet says, you're a better man than I am, Heinie Zim.

Anyways, after I leave the big leagues flat and buy me that movie house, and it starts turnin' out money like a mint—well, you might know. The missus breaks out from head to foot with a rash of social ambitions, and nothin' would do but I and she

must move out twenty miles from Main Street to the beautiful and exclusive suburb of Bloomford on the Bias or somewhere.

Well, the missus has nerved into a couple or so tea-fights and things—though, of course, she would of went much faster if she hadn't of been handicaped by marryin' beneath her—and so now she claims that the first line trenches is hers. I'll say all right, let her have 'em. As for me, I should worry about this here society stuff. But it seems like there's still further worlds which the missus stoops to conquer, like they say; and so now it looks like she's gettin' all organized up and everythin' for one of them regular big pushes against the, now, secondary line of defense.

And as for that—well, over the top, Ethel, with the best o' luck and all the rest of it—and I hope you do! But I'll say

when you go, you go alone. Not that I'm a slacker nor nothin' like that; you know me! But—well, I would rather charge Milwaukee with one bottle of grape-juice any time than tackle any part of one of these here, now, social functions with a regiment of regulars. I'll say I mean it!

Still, this golf thing—

"Please be serious," says the missus.

"I'll try," I says, "but if you wanna make it easier, tell me that funny story again. You know—that one you was tellin' last night. That perfect scream, like you called it, about—"

"I believe we've discussed some people's peculiar ideas of humor already," says the missus. "But, honest, Jim—"

But what's the use? In part, as they say, she spoke as follows. She says if I would join out with them pill chasers at the country club, it might help a whole lot. You know what she meant. She wasn't referrin' to Belgium. Provided, of course, I behaves myself. "Only, Jim, remember you got to keep away from the nineteenth, because—"

And she says where she has it on good authority that the professional—if you haven't never played this game, I mean the, now, butterscotch grafter named Andy, or Aleck that teaches you how to hit the little old pill at three dollars a miss, and so you can judge for yourself how crazy Aleck is to have you learn. She says that she knows for a fact where the pro hasn't been paid off in three months, and so now, if ever, is the time for all roughnecks with money, mentionin' no one in particular, to come to the aid of the Bloomford near-golf club. And take it from the missus, these same low-lives will be greeted with open arms and everythin'.

However, she says, it might be well for me to be the very first to volunteer.

"And please, Jim, just to please me, I wisht—"

And so on.

Well, I leave her persuade me for about half an hour, and then finally I give in and says, all right, as a special favor to her and the country club, I'll join. Leave it to me, I didn't let on, not by as much as the flicker of an eyelash, how I had already

made up my mind to crash into this golf bunch long before the missus ever said one word about it. What would that of got me?

Sure—they make the best ones. In fact, between I and the President and you, I think they had ought to insist on it. Look at this, now, Gerard. He was a married guy. And so was Von Bernstorff. Charity begins at home—and so does diplomacy. If you know what I mean.

So the missus has to hand it to me; and I make good.

In a week or so I'm notified where I've been sentenced to the Bloomford Golf Club for one year, and fined one hundred and fifty dollars, includin' annual dues for the current per annum, and costs.

And costs. Now this cost thing—well, it depends. For one thing, even on a fair day with gentle southerly breezes, y' understand, there's two kinds of golf courses—wet and dry. The dry ones is mostly, now, theoretical. The wet ones consists of eighteen holes which is played in the usual manner, plus one, the nineteenth, which supplies the humidity, and which had ought to be played with discretion. So the costs depends a good deal on whether you play the game for the exercise or the thirst. You get the idea. They depend on that and, oh, quite a number of things.

For instance, if a guy is onto the game and workin' good, them dues and things, and incidentals and everythin'—well, I should worry about the expense. Believe me, if all goes well—but never mind.

Still, I wouldn't be surprised if—but let all that go.

Well, I had to laugh. I didn't meet up with this bird till a couple of weeks or so after I sign up with these here Bloomford Bloomers. And what d'ye know? I was layin' for him all the while! But before that I had snuck round the course a few times all by my lonesome—nobody ast me to play with them anyhow, because anybody could see easy enough anyway where I was an awful dub—I snuck round, appearin' kind of unconscious and everythin', but all the while sizin' up the layout and gettin' a good line on these birds' game.

So pretty soon I seen where this bird was simply built for me anyway you look



at it; and just when I was wonderin' how could I get next to him—I had to laugh. Y' understand, I didn't know this guy from Adam, nor him me. But—well, I guess maybe I wasn't the only one that was lookin' for a sucker.

Anyways, one afternoon I blowed round to the club all set for a couple of rounds of solitaire and maybe a little, say, quiet observation. And I and him happens to meet up in the locker-room, and he breaks the ice himself! No trouble at all! Just like that! I wouldn't of dared do it because it would of looked too raw—see?

"Nice day," he says, fishin' round in his locker after somethin'. Mine was right next to his.

"Some little day is right!" I says.

"Yes?" he says. "Oh! Exactly! Ah! Yes! H-m!"

"Absolutely! To be sure! Precisely!" I says.

And if I was to try and hang a nickname on this bird, that last is what I would call him: "Precisely" Pinney. Listen! You could load a shotgun clean to the muzzle with iron pills, shoot both barrels into this bird, and you couldn't draw a drop of blood in three weeks! Every day in the year he wears a razor-edged face complicated with a pair of ingrowin' eye-glasses and an expression of, now, irritation. You can see at a glance that he's a regular fuss-budget. You know the kind. Everythin' has to be just exactly so, and precisely where, and strictly when. To the dot!

He's the kind of guy that if he was lost in the woods or somewhere, and starved to death for ten days, and rescued one minute after his regular time for breakfast—well, it's either a case of forcible feedin' or a funeral unless nature goes crazy and pulls him through till his schedule says it's time for lunch.

He was somethin' like that.

And so, of course, I knowed—

But— "Quite so!" he says. "I don't seem—new member?" he asts.

"Almost," I says. "Just as good. You wouldn't hardly know the difference."

"You might say slightly used," he cackles, grabbin' off the idea, the way people are always doin' to you, and thinkin'

he's said somethin'. And if there's anythin' that makes me sore—

"Well," he goes on, "that's good. You know there's virtue in numbers; and the more the merrier."

"Yeh," I says, "the higher the fewer. And speakin' of numbers," I continues to myself, "take it from me, old kid, I got yours!"

"Edgar Y. Pinney," he pages himself.

"All right," I says, "I'll bite—w'y not?" But it goes clean over him. So then—"Miller, *alias*, Jim," I confesses.

We're pleased to meetcha.

"How's the game goin'?" he asts kind of careless; but of course I knowed he was interested.

"Rotten," I says.

"Have you had much experience?" he inquires.

"Well," I says, "I've traveled round some, about as much as the next guy. And one day I seen Mary Pickford on the street. But—this golf pastime? Not a chance! Y' see, I was five years with the Tigers, and right away after that I got myself all mixed up in this film game, and so—"

"Tigers?" he asts, all puzzled up.

"Yeh," I says. "Care Tyrus Cobb, f. o. b. Detroit, U. S. A., the land of the free and the home of the easy."

But I see where I'm goin' too fast for him, and so I pause to explain slowly in words of one syllable. And say! What d'ye know about a guy that never heard of— On the level, you wouldn't believe it, would you?

"Listen!" I says. "Would you mind explainin' to me where you've been livin', for the past few hectic years, and unless it might incriminate you, what might be your job?"

"To oblige a friend," he says, "I don't mind sayin' that for some time past—since, to be exact, August 4, 1910—I have been chiefly occupied as a writer of school and college text-books."

"I get you," I says.

"Yes?" he says again, but I let it go. What was the use?

"Obviously," he says, whatever that is, "it's a rather sedentary occupation."

"Is it possible!" I says. "Now d'ye

know, I had an idea where it would be kind of confin'."

"So on the advice of my physician," he confides, "I play golf three times each week, on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays."

"See directions on bottle," I says. "In acute cases take six in a glass of hot water."

"You'll pardon me," he says, "but I don't seem to follow."

"Well," I says, "if you get lost, cheer up! Columbus will be along in a little while and discover you."

Rip Van Winkle had nothin' on this bird.

And it begins to look like after all I'm up against a dead one. So pretty soon I says:

"I understand where there's more or less gamblin' goin' on amongst—"

"Oh," he cuts in, "not exactly that! Gambling, you know—no, not precisely that! Occasionally we wager a small number of balls—say, a ball a hole—on the outcome of the contest; or, in rare instances, a small cash sum. Undoubtedly it adds a certain zest to the diversion which otherwise seems to be lacking; and though, at first, I must own to the existence of certain conscientious scruples, I have since learned to look upon these things somewhat more broadly; and, I believe, with right."

Very good, Edgar!

It's plain to be seen where the evil influences which surrounds that fatal game of golf has made good in the case of Edgar Y. Pinney. Oh, well, simply another good man went wrong.

"Sure," I says. "That's me! I don't never gamble; but a perfectly genteel, now, wager between friends—that's different!"

"Precisely," he says. "Have you a partner for this afternoon?"

I had to laugh!

Sure I had a partner—Edgar Y. Pinney!

Well, I don't know as there's any use of goin' over all the little prelims—every little old move in the game. You know how these affairs is handled as well as I. I nurse this bird along, playin' with him three days a week, with results about fifty-fifty, though it's plain to be seen where my wins is mostly pure luck. You get the idea.

Then one day I get him right, and—

listen! Before he has a chance to snap out of it, I get good old Edgar booked for somethin' like a little regular money—a small cash wager amountin' to precisely fifty round iron dollars! I guess you have to hand it to me. It was smooth work.

Well, somebody in the family has to economize, and if the missus won't do it, then it's up to me. And I figure where them fifty bones will go quite a ways toward defrayin' the expense of my first perfect year in the Bloomford Golf Club—with what I can maybe pick up afterward.

Now, of course, though anybody could use it, fifty bones wouldn't make or break you; but, still, it's enough to create interest. I guess Edgar must of talked. Anyways, when I and him goes to the mat that day we have some gallery. You would think it was Chick Evans playin' this here Oh-you-met or somebody for the title and Al Jolson's salary for a minute.

That settled it for me. If it hadn't of been for all them spectators I had about made up my mind to try and see this little thing through without tippin' nobody off to my regular game; and I dare say you know why. Still, fifty bucks is fifty bucks, and on the level, this here Pinney person shoots a game that a guy can't afford to take too many chances with, and, of course, nobody wants to get trimmed right in front of a whole lot of people, and so—

Well, on the way to the first tee I says to Edgar:

"Listen, Eddie," I says, "I've been kinda thinkin' things over, and—"

"One moment, please," says Edgar, very precise and cuttin'. "were you by any chance intendin' to—"

"Not so you would notice it!" I says. "Shall we make it a hunderd?"

"Precisely," he says.

I guess Edgar must of had some kind of an income outside of them, now, text-books. Anyways, right from then on I ceased to have any pity for him. But what d'ye know! The idea of him accusin' me of tryin' to crawl! I had to laugh! At that, though what's a hunderd between friends, it looks like this here celebrated affair is gettin' a lot more serious every minute.

"Got you!" I says. "But what I was



gonna say—y'know, I been kinda thinkin' things over, and yesterday I was talkin' with a guy that knows a guy that's a friend of a second cousin of Jerry Travers, and this bird says— Well, anyhow, I got a hunch where I been goin' at this game all wrong, all wrong. Get me? I been takin' too much time over my shots, all this slow back and follow through and don't press stuff, and how not to hang onto your club, and be sure and keep your knee stiff to say nothin' of your upper lip, and keep your eye on the ball and the other guy, and everythin', and is my mashie on straight, and all this and that, and—

"Take it from me, there's nothin' to it! I've made up my mind where you don't want to act all the time like the little round ball had you buffaloed—get me? Show your sand! See? What you wanna do is brace right up to that pesky little pill, just like it wasn't no more dangerous than seventy-five cents' worth of white paint and stuff that had had the smallpox when it was young and was left badly pitted—Brace right up to it, look it in the eye, and—*bam!* Ride it! *Ride it!* What?

"After this no more of this preliminary putterin' round and foolish funny-business for mine! Understand me?"

"Exactly!" says Edgar, smilin' one of them superior brands of smiles that makes you want to smear a man.

Y' understand, I had to have some kind of an alibi; and all that stuff about changin' my game—well, that was it. Not but what I meant every word of it. As a matter of fact, that was why I grabbed off good old Edgar in the first place. Nothin' is more apt to put them methodical birds off their game than to stack up against a guy that plays—well, like I. And if you don't get me, I'll say that before this I'd been playin' like Edgar. And believe me, it was some strain! I was glad it was over.

Well, I win the honor—which is golf for kick-off—and, just like I had gave Edgar fair warnin', I tees up in a jiffy, just as loose and careless as a kid makin' mud pies, and then, without even shiftin' my segar, I hauls off and—oh, lady, lady! A regular old John W. Screamer, right in the groove, over the hills and far away!

Some little drive! This here Colonel Bogey, the famous golfin' tourist, never tore off one that could shade it.

Anyways, the innocent bystanders, as we say at the Metropolitan, greets the performance with a gasp; and I can see where Edgar Precisely Pinney is shook to the core.

But—"Allons, mes enfants!" I cheers Edgar on, quotin' from the fifth reel of "Two Years in Flatbush and Back with a Smile." "Let's go!"

Now knowin' Edgar like you do—well, speakin' of golf and things, I should say it was a toss-up betwixt Edgar and the United States Senate as to which is able to precede a very little action with the greatest footage of red tape, and the most back-in' and fillin', and filibusterin' and everythin'. As a staller this guy has any heavy-weight champion you're a mind to mention lookin' as eager as a girl at her first dance; and, on the level, anybody that knowed how could semaphore, to a comma, the first forty-two thrillin' chapters of that great serial success, entitled "The Recollections of a Rummy," in less time and motions than the preliminary *wiggle-waggles* and everythin' which Edgar habitually indulges in before slicin' into the rough.

Well, I have stood it for quite some time; but now the lid is off; and so when Edgar, hayin' recovered some from the shock, starts in much as usual, shadow golfin' all over the tee, makin' threatenin' gestures with his club toward the next hole, and vicious swipes at nothin' at all, and all them sorts of things—right in there with the proper form accordin' to the very latest dope.

"Aw, come on!" I says. "What's the idea? Let's go! Kiss it! *Kiss it!*"

There's another gasp from the gallery; and Edgar straightens up from peerin' anxiously at his left foot to see is it precisely the right distance from the ball.

"A little silence!" he growls.

"And some action!" I insists. "Some action! Over the top! Ride the little ball! On to Paris!"

"Oh, lovely!" simpers a little guy wearin' one of them trench style upper lips.

"I must insist—" says Edgar.

"Suit yourself," I says, "but hit the ball first! There's eighteen holes to go, and this here's only the first one, and I got a dinner date with myself at precisely seven thirty-three—on the hunderd you owe me!"

Well, by this time I see where Eddie is simply chatterin' with rage—which, of course, is the point—and so I lay off him.

And in due time Edgar slices into the rough!

"There!" he moans. "Now look what you made me do!"

"I hope you're satisfied," I says, "with apologies to 'You Made Me What I Am To-Day,' or somethin'. But don't flatter yourself! Nobody couldn't make you do nothin'. Your habits is too fixed."

At that, maybe I might of had somethin' to do with it.

But anyways, as for that first hole, I "spurlosly versenkts" the little old ball in par, if you know what I mean; and Edgar takes a couple more. And so I am one up. On the next teein' ground I pull some more of that hurry-up stuff on Edgar, and again whilst we're carryin' on, as they say, and Edgar happens to stick to the fairway, and so I can talk to him without usin' long distance. And so I am two up. And all this while, remember, I'm givin' one of the greatest little old exhibitions of rapid-fire golf as was ever seen. What with raisin' the ante and everythin' it don't seem like I had ought to take any chances—and me a married man.

On the third tee, whilst Edgar addresses the ball, as us golfers say, I once more addresses Edgar; and so I am three up. I leave him halve the fourth. Of course, a guy has to use some diplomacy. I win the fifth. I win the sixth. I win the seventh—

And what d'ye know! They had the nerve to say where I had framed up this here Pinney to a fare-you-well and played him for a sucker! The very idea! Of course, the way things looked— But who knows what might of happened if I hadn't of happened on that idea of changin' my game? He might of trimmed me just as easy as not. And you know yourself where I give him fair warnin', and he hands me the laugh!

What could be fairer than that? Of

course, I didn't say how, when I was with the Tigers, Stuffy McMannis, that was manager, was a nut on this golf pastime; and I and Stuffy was pals, and just to keep Stuffy feelin' good-natured and everythin' I and him chases the pill most every—I didn't say nothin' about that because it wasn't nothin' but ancient history and nobody couldn't possibly be interested. At that, there was a time when I wouldn't ask no odds of—but let it go.

Oh, well, anyways, I win the hunderd. As for Edgar—use your own judgment!

And right away afterward I was sorry.

If I had only knowed how the Grand Annual Tournament of the Bloomford Golf Club was due to be pulled in just a couple of weeks or so—well, believe me, I wouldn't of tipped my mitt and gave my game away to everybody that seen or heard about that little set-to of I and Edgar's—which includes each and every inmate of beautiful and exclusive Bloomford—and, besides, there wouldn't of been no conspiracy. And maybe if—but never mind.

Anyways, a couple of days before this tournament thing—I wonder did I say how the missus give me Hail Columbia on account of the way I put it over on Edgar? A couple of days before the big show, just as soon as I knowed where I stood, I sends out an S. O. S. to a couple of other crooks to meet me at the Mikado at precisely 1.30 P.M.

I hadn't never been in this Mikado joint but once before, but right then and there I seen at a glance where it was one fine place to hatch somethin', a plot, or a, now, conspiracy, or somethin'. At a glance! And yet there's people that denies the educational value of the movies! Y' understand, this Mikado place, that calls itself a restaurant, is located in the city where all us country gentlemen busies ourselves one way or another till duty calls for the absolutely last time and it's time to go home—to Bloomford.

And, back in the good old days when battles was fought by rounds or innin's instead of by inches, before y' understand, all the joy in life was reduced to, now, not exceeding two and one half per cent—just before, say, automobiles and these here



Detroit Me-Twos got to be as common as flags in a Cohan show, I lose my guess if this Mikado beanery wasn't a horse garage. Anyhow, all along one side of the room there's a series of little stalls, though the side walls only runs half-way up to the ceilin', and so you have to be careful with your voice, where the gang can get together and plot till the cows come home without nobody bein' the wiser. But all in all, you take a bunch of guys that wanted to start somethin', and—well, some little meetin'-house, the Mikado!

But, anyways, them other two crooks shows up right on the dot—at precisely 1.30 P.M.—and so then we calls it an executive session right away, in one of them little horse boudoirs like I said.

As for these other two, now, gangsters—leave it to me, they're a couple of regular guys, by the name of Ed Butler and Dud Parker, and both fellow citizens of dear old Bloomford, though neither one of them is up in society like I and the missus, and so I feel more at home in their company. On the level, if it hadn't of been for them two birds, Ed and Dud, I don't guess I would of ever lived through Bloomford. I would of cracked under the strain. On the other hand, the missus says—

But—“Listen, boys,” I says, as soon as we're all set. “You remember my tellin' you how I slip it over on this precise guy Pinney? Well, believe me, I made the mistake of my life!”

“One hunderd to the good,” says Dud, “and—some mistake! Where d'ye get that noise?”

“I had ought to of saved my speed for this tournament thing they've went and sprang on me,” I says. “On the level, the way I had my game covered up, I bet you I could of got sixty to one from every guy in the club against my coppin' the pennant in this here Bloomford world serious—and I would of walked home!”

“It's the truth,” says Ed.

“And that ain't the worst of it,” I says. “Of course, they're wise to me now, and—what d'ye know? They've went and rang in a ringer!”

“What d'ye mean, ringer?” asks Dud.

“Well,” I says, “it's like this. Of course,

this here's an open tournament and everythin', but what with the war, and Plattsburg, and all this and that, I know for a fact where there wasn't no outside entries. Get me? And so then what do they do? When they seen how things was goin', and how nothin' on earth could stop me from coppin' that little old cup—Y' understand, for some reason or other, all them club guys is dead sore on me on account of the way they claim I frames up this here Pinney, and it's a pipe where they've got together to hand me the works—What do they do?”

“Well,” I says, “it's any little old thing to beat yours as ever, Jim Miller, and they go out and dig up this here, now, Percy Witherspoon!”

“What did he ever do,” asks Dud, “this here, now, Percy Witherspoon?”

“Well,” I says, “I happen to know—amongst other things about this guy Witherspoon—it would astonish you the amount of information some of us crooks possesses—I happen to know where you wouldn't hardly class this bird right up there in the first flight; but you can take it from me, he'll take some trimmin'. And listen, boys! That goes both ways! Get me?”

“You got a nerve!” says Dud. “Of course, you may be good, but where do you get off with a guy like that? Believe me, this bird must be good! Or what—”

“One moment, please,” I says, and—well, both the, now, stalls next to ours was empty.

And so then I says, “I'll show you! Look, Ed! Listen, Dud! This is good! Last night I got to thinkin' this thing over; and when it struck me—I had to laugh! What d'ye know! Them birds has played right into our hands!”

“Where d'ye get that ‘our?’” asks Dud.

“It's up to you,” I says. “If you boys wanna come in on this and help me out, believe me, there's a nice little split in it for the both of you. What I mean—you can play it as strong as you like.”

“Yeh!” says Dud. “Nothin' doin'. I and Ed is both flat, and—that's the kind of a rate we work on. Understand me? You do the gamblin'. I and Ed works for wages—get me?”

And I might as well say right here that before we get through with it I leave them two robbers have their own way. There wasn't no other way out of it. And so, if this here little scenario fails to pan out anywhere—well, I'm shy the hunderd I win off Edgar without goin' no farther than Ed and Dud.

Honest, after all I had did for them two boy bandits at one time or another, you wouldn't of believed—but that's all right.

But, anyways— "Yes, sir," I says, "them birds has played right into our hand! Because—look! They've fixed it—dear old Edgar is on the committee that makes the drawin's for partners, and so what more d'ye want? They've fixed it so I and this here Witherspoon leads the show! Get it? They pair me off with this guy, and starts us right off as soon as the bell rings—so's I won't be clutterin' up the course no longer than positively necessary. See? This bird is supposed to put me out of business right on the go-down. We leaves the first tee promptly at 9 A.M. on the openin' day of the—"

"And so that's what you call playin' right into your hand, is it?" says Dud. "Well, believe me—"

"Of course, nobody couldn't expect you to see it," I says. "But listen here!"

So then I explains it in language that even a couple of lowbrows such as them can't fail to understand. Of course, Ed and Dud is supposed to be friends of mine; still, I must say—but that's as it may be.

"Geel!" says Ed, when the idea has seeped through the bone, "I wouldn't be surprised if—"

"Of course you wouldn't," I says. "It's a cinch! Nothin' to it! Take it from me, right now I got a grip on that little old cup like Strangler Lewis!"

But Dud—I'll tell the world fair, Dud is one of them birds that has to be showed.

"But how about *you*?" he asks. "Suppose everythin' breaks for us just like you said: how about you? I can't see where it ain't fifty-fifty. You got to show me where you would be in any better shape than him."

"Didn't I tell you?" I says. "Look, Dud! When I was with the Tigers there

was days on end when I didn't hardly sleep a night—and you know what I done! Cobb had nothin' on me. Losin' simply seven or eight hours sleep was nothin' in my young life. And believe me, I'm still there! It's the truth! I'm the original iron man. There's only one of us, and that's me!

"No, sir, Dud," I says, "I'll guarantee right now to show up at the first tee, at precisely 9 A.M. on the openin' day of this grand annual pill bustin' contest, as fine and fresh as a daisy! There wasn't never but one thing—"

I kind of wisht I hadn't said that; though, of course, it couldn't make no possible difference.

"What d'ye mean, one thing?" asks Dud. You might know.

"Why," I says, "it's nothin' that has anythin' to do with what we're talking about; and so I might as well tell you. Ever since I and a bunch of other guys gets mixed up in a kind of—now—accident and winds up in a hospital—"

"Was anybody hurt?" asks Ed.

"No," I says. "We just dropped in to call on a nurse. Ever since then—"

"What kind of an accident was it?" asks Dud.

"Why," I says, "it was like this." And so then I goes on to tell him. "And that," I says, "was a good two years ago; but somehow, ever since then, I can't seem to get over it. It's queer!"

"Yeh," says Dud. "Queer!"

"Was she a good-looker?" asks Ed.

Well, some people has queer ideas. I'll say I haven't got no use for people anyways. Give 'em half a chance and they're always ready to believe the worst of you—and swear to it. But if you got any credit comin', believe me, you gotta show 'em! And even then, in a pinch—they fails to recollect. Ain't it the truth?

Now—and remember you're gettin' this from the only person that's qualified to speak—for instance, that time I get the glad news about how Mr. Percy Witherspoon, the famous golfer, will positively compete you know when, right away it occurred to me where I could do—I wouldn't say give—somebody a good turn. And that's all the credit you get.



Just the same, no matter what you might of heard different, it so happens that I and my good friends Ed Butler and Dud Parker—you know Ed and Dud—it happens that I and Ed and Dud get to talkin' about how this Mr. Percy Witherspoon, the great golfer, is about to drop in on beautiful and exclusive Bloomford for a day or so, and everythin'; and all of a sudden it come across me.

It occurred to me where I and Ed and Dud could do Mr. Percy Witherspoon, the well-known golfer, a regular favor—some-thing kind of nice and, now, thoughtful of me—and Ed and Dud.

I'm always thinkin' of little things like that.

So I suggests to Ed and Dud where I and Ed and Dud appoint ourselves a committee of three, representin' lovely and select Bloomford, and that grand old organization knowed as the Golf Club, to receive Mr. Percy Witherspoon, the notorious golfer, with open arms and anythin' else that happens to be handy and, now, open, and to present him with the keys and the freedom of the city, and the seas, and—everythin'. You get the idea.

In other words, I suggests that I and Ed and Dud grab off this bird just the minute he hits Bloomford and give him the time of his life. Oh, no regular rough stuff nor nothin' like that; but—you know what I mean. And just between I and Ed and Dud I kind of let on where—though Percy is a stranger to me—I have heard where this bird is, now, only slightly averse, as you might say, to an occasional little break in trainin'. But that's strictly between I and Ed and Dud. Anyways, I don't guess where he would be so rude as to refuse our hospitality.

And as for this hospitality thing—well, figurin' in everythin' which we has in store for Percy, includin' that inspiration which I'm gonna have at 9 P.M. to just take a run into the city and see what's left of that new "Oh" show that's openin' that very night—figurin' everythin' I estimate where I and Percy and Dud and Ed arrives back in Bloomford about 4 G.M.

And believe me, if this Witherspoon bird—

But what could be fairer than that?

And yet you know what people say: how it was all nothin' but another of them frame-ups of Jim Millers's; and how I figured that I could take this guy Witherspoon if I could get him off his game; and how, just to prove it, look at the way I bets on myself, right up to the limit; and how—but you know what people say.

Well, anyhow—and you can believe them or me, I don't care which—we put it over. Them other birds must of been asleep or somethin'. Anyways, we didn't have no trouble, and when Percy blows into Bloomford I and Ed and Dud grabs him off just as easy as nothin'. I was workin' the Bloomford Arms, Dud was layin' for him at the railroad station, and Ed was doin' just general scout work. We figure where Percy will show some time along early in the evenin' of the night before; and—well, I drewed him.

There's class to Percy—though I don't like his looks. Take it from me, this guy looks more like a celebrated grouch than a well-known golfer. He's one of them, now, quiet, sinister, as we say in the movies, kind. But he pulls into the historic Bloomford Arms in a tourin'-car like a battle-ship, and so—well, that's all anybody needs nowadays. And that's all some, not to say most, people has got. You know it.

Leave it to me! I wises myself to Percy over his left shoulder before he has a chance to blot the register, and takes him right in hand till a boy I send out for Dud and Ed makes good and they report for duty. After which we immediately adjourns to the grill; and some little dinner! I can remember right now, to a cent, just how much it cost me.

And all goes well. This bird falls for our stuff just as easy as if he was one of them, now, Romanoffs, and fallin' was his favorite exercise. Yes, sir, things is surely comin' my way. It's true that once I seem to catch a glance of—precisely—Mr. Edgar Y. Pinney sort of stallin' round in the offin' and appearin' more or less interested; but there didn't nothin' come of it, and so I guessed I must of been mistaken.

Any ways, at the proper time, I suggests that little ride back to the angry city, be-

cause I hear where the last act of this here new musical crime in three counts is somethin' absolutely new, and how it would knock you dead, and all this and that; and we can make it easy.

"On with the dance," says Percy, "but only on one condition. I thank you for your kind hospitality; but you boys has done your bit. We go in my car, piloted by yours as ever, or—nothin' doin'."

Well, I couldn't see no objection to that, because, of course, I seen right away where it would save me money. And so I agree.

Now there was somethin' kind of important I wanted to say to this bird Witherspoon before we starts out, but somebody starts tellin' one about a couple of Irishmen, or somethin', and so I didn't feel like I had ought to interrupt. And by this time they had brung the car around, and we piles in.

Well, I guessed, after all, it wouldn't make no particular difference; if there was any cause for it, I could speak about it later. Of course, anythin' up to, say—

But anyways, so then we piles in, and—"Let's go!" I says.

Boy! We went! I'll say so! We was one mile from there in nothin'. I never seen a car pick up like that one! One moment we're standin' still, and the next we're leavin' there like we'd had a runnin' start around the world! In an instant we're makin' speed look like a snail with the—now—paresis; and from thence we increases the pace by leaps and bounds till we're nothin' but a kind of—now—blur.

At which exact spot on the speedometer—I flops! Get me? Because—well, maybe I didn't make it exactly clear where that accident that I and them other guys was mixed up in—like I tells Ed and Dud that time—was one of them joy-ride things—though I didn't want to go in the first place and wouldn't never of went if I hadn't been dragged into it. Anyways, you might know, we winds up in a hospital; and ever since then, I'll tell the world fair, I haven't had no use for high speed! Get me? It's somethin' like this here shell-shock stuff, I guess. Anyways, I can't seem to get over it. I couldn't hardly describe how it affects me; but, say, anythin' over thirty per

or so, and I've lost the old angora—see? Somehow I feel sort of sick and faint, and everythin'; and it's a fact, sometimes I don't get over it for a good ten days or so. I'll say I don't. It's queer!

So don't ask me!

But Dud says there wasn't nothin' you could do but hang on and holler, though what was the use of hollerin' because it was fifteen miles behind before you had hardly got it out of you? So about all there was to do was hang on. Dud says, of course there wasn't no reason why we couldn't of stopped this here maniac from runnin' away with us—oh, no reason at all, except if anybody had laid a hand on him or the wheel, where would we of went to? "I leave it to you," Dud says; and—well, it looks reasonable. And I guess that's more than we would of; because, anyways, it's a cinch we wouldn't of looked natural.

Dud says we never went near the city where we started for; but he guesses we must of just sorta casually loafed through most every other well-known burg on the face of the justly famous globe. And Ed agrees with him.

Ed says where there was a lot of them places that he had always wanted to visit sometime, but we passes through' em so—now—impatiently that nobody couldn't tell where you are; and so Ed is all smoked up for fear when he gets his vacation he'll make a mistake and go somewhere where he's went already. Well, I don't feel like there's anythin' I can do to help him; because I'll tell the world, all this while I'm dead to it.

Anyways, Dud and Ed both says we must of been on the road—or within, say, twenty foot of it, up or sidewise—for a good two hours when it happened. Dud says all four tires blows up simultaneous. Ed says he hears only three explosions; but, of course, two of them might of went at once. The same as I went—at once!—and also Ed and Dud. Maybe it was the—now—tire barrage that waked me up. Anyways, I remember startin' and—landin'. After that I seem to forget for a while. But I'll say, after I wakes up, it takes me five minutes to get back where I started from; and so—well, that's how far I went.

Now believe me, if I'd been feelin' right



—and I'll say I wasn't!—what I would of did to that bird, Mr. Percy Witherspoon—But anyways, I'll say I'm harmless; and besides, I can't see where it would do any particular good to beat this guy up: what he needs is about ninety-nine years in a asylum, because if this guy ain't crazy then what is he? And believe me, I'm willin' to do what I can to put him there!

Maybe Ed and Dud and Percy might of fixed up the car and rode back in it. But as for me, I'll say I'm through!

I arrives back in attractive and aristocratic Bloomford at 6 A.M.—by trolley.

So you better believe I didn't show up at the first tee that mornin' as fine and fresh as no daisy! On the contrary, I feel like I had been drawn through a knothole. Y' understand, it wasn't just simply bein' rode for a home run when we hit that stone wall, or whatever it was, and landin' on my head that made me feel like that.

Still, I don't guess where Mr. Percy Witherspoon will be feelin' any too fit, any more than I.

So, anyways, there I was, waitin' at the church, when Edgar Y. Pinney, lookin' very exact and everythin' this precise mornin', approaches along with another guy.

"Allow me," says Edgar. "Mr. Miller, Mr. Witherspoon."

"Witherspoon!" I says. "What d'ye mean, Witherspoon? Then who—"

Because—what d'ye know? I haven't never laid an eye on this bird in my life!

If I had, I would of remembered it. You can see at a glance that this guy is *there*. You know what I mean. He kind of—now—impresses you. And not only that but it's no trouble at all to see where this bird is right in that old pink of condition and fit for the game of his young life!

"Exactly," says Edgar. "Mr. Witherspoon, your partner, as the sayin' is."

I wonder did I say that, so far as I know, Ed Butler and Dud Parke is the only inmates of beautiful Bloomford that misses this little scene? And—oh, well, not a doubt in the world, this here is the start of a perfect day!

Well, of course, I seen right away where somebody must of worked a plant on me, or somethin'.

"I guess there must be some mistake," I says. "I'm not lookin' for no partner, not this mornin'. Y' see, I—now—I was took sick in the night, and—I guess maybe I must of forgot to say anythin' about it before—but anyways, it looks like I would have to let the match go by—now—default."

"Ah!" says Edgar. "Precisely!"

And believe me, for less than that I could of killed him!

Well, the returns begin comin' in in a day or so. First off, Dud digs it up who was the bird that pulled that Paul Revere stuff on us. I'll say I hadn't hardly made no effort toward clearin' up this here mystery myself. I was stuck so many different ways I had kind of lost interest.

But Dud says—listen! That bird was none other than Buddy Bidwell, the great racin' driver! And so here's not wishin' Buddy no harm, but if he ever gets throwed, I hope he don't land in no feather-bed! You know what I mean.

And then, it might of been a couple of days later that I drops into the Mikado for the third and last time. I haven't never been there since. Somehow I've took a kind of dislike to it.

Anyways, after a while I looks at my watch to see how many hours I've been waitin' for a coupla three-minute eggs. But never mind the eggs. It's exactly 1.45 P.M. And at that precise moment Mr. Edgar Y. Pinney breezes in and passes quietly into one of them little booths right next to where I and Ed and Dud—but you remember. And so then right away I knowed where Edgar had been passin' quietly into that very same booth at precisely 1.45 P.M. each and every day for probably not a minute less than twenty years anyways.

And I'll tell the world, if I had acted like I felt, on this here precise occasion he wouldn't never of left there! Still and all, y' understand if I had showed myself—well, I wouldn't give him the satisfaction. I simply went away from there.

And I'll say this is the last time I ever try to help out the missus with any of that society stuff of hers. Right to this day she hasn't never let up on me—about it; and so after this, leave her fend for herself!

# Misery Mansions by Philip Gibbs

## PRECEDING CHAPTERS BRIEFLY RETOLD

AFTER three years of study and travel on the Continent and in America, Paul Whiteleaf, youngest son of William Whiteleaf, the head and self-made founder of the firm of William Whiteleaf & Sons, manufacturers—made prosperous by the sweated labor of their workers—returned to his home in England. There he was welcomed by his father and mother; by Matthew, the eldest son and a power in the business; by Christopher, the second son, an indolent man-about-town; and by Margaret, his beautiful sister.

Paul, somewhat of a dreamer, had not yet decided upon his life work. While he was making up his mind he devoted himself to his sister, and through her met Lydia Faversham, a patrician beauty. He spent much of his time studying the problems of the poor, and found that, under his avery, James Brent, one of the footmen, was a real human being. Then, one night, Lizzie Legg, a girl of the slums, and Alf Staggers, a man whose hand had been withered by working with a process used in one of the Whiteleaf shops, broke in to steal and were discovered by Paul, who treated them kindly, learning something of the awful conditions of life of his father's workers, and set them go, promising to see them again. He visited the factory, and heard his brother ordering a foreman to keep wages down. "It's the law of life," Matthew said when Paul protested. "It's the devil's law!" exclaimed Paul.

On the fiftieth anniversary of his start in business, William Whiteleaf called his family together and told them that he had decided to divide his fortune into three and a half shares and give it to his children—Margaret to receive the half-share, and Matthew to manage the business. Each of the sons received 500,000 pounds sterling. Paul told his father that he would use his share to improve the condition of their workers—pay it back to them. Hurt and angry, his father ordered him to leave the house forever.

Determined to learn at first hand the real conditions of life in the slums, Paul, accompanied by Brent, took a room in a tenement called "Misery Mansions," and secured a job in the Whiteleaf factory, living upon what he earned. One night a cry of "Murder!" rang through the hall outside their room.

## BOOK III—Continued

### CHAPTER II.

#### NEXT-DOOR NEIGHBORS.

IN the flickering gloom of a passage where only one gas-jet burned dimly, though here and there along the landing there were bars of yellowish light which came from narrowly opened doors out of which shadow faces peered, Paul Whiteleaf was unable at first to see the cause of the tumult outside his room.

But he heard the thud of heavy feet at the far end of the passage and the swift scamper of lighter footsteps and hoarse voices of men and women making a queer babble of excited speech. He was conscious of staring eyes looking down out of the darkness of the flight of stairs above this landing and of a huddled crowd of people, among whom were small boys and girls, almost naked, or in ragged night clothes, staring up from the flight below.

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It seemed as if the whole population of Misery Mansions had been called out of their dens by this scene on the fifth floor; a few queer sentences, jerked out huskily, seemed like the chorus in a Greek drama, explaining the action of the piece.

"'E'll murder 'er, as sure as blazes!"

"Aye. 'E's a fair devil when the drink's in 'im."

"She's a plucked un, and no mistake! Keep back there. 'E's got his knife out! There'll be trouble with the p'leece. I'm going back to bed."

It was a fight between a man and a woman. Yes. Paul could see their faces now.

The woman held the man by the wrist and her other hand gripped the scarf round his throat. She was trying to strangle the fellow while he was swaying to and fro in a drunken, brutish way, vainly struggling to get free the hand which held a blade of steel.

In their struggle they were staggering together down the passage, close to where Paul was standing, and the gas-jet flung its rays upon the woman's face. It was, rather, a girl's face, and in spite of loose coils of brown hair which were flung from side to side as her body was thrown this way and that, so that she was like an animal in a death-struggle, she had a kind of wild gipsy beauty.

Her eyes were on fire, and she was laughing with a fierce gaiety, showing a flash of white teeth, as though enjoying the struggle.

One sleeve of her ragged bodice had been torn clean off, so that her arm and shoulder were bare, and so that the onlookers of this little game could see the strength and the whiteness of her flesh. She was panting, and shouting out jerky sentences between her gasps:

"You drunken swine! Slice your wife and little uns, would you? Oh dear, no, not if I knows it! All because of slushing the swipes! Good for you I had my peepers open. What! you want to knife me, do you? 'Tain't so easy, Jake. I'll scrag you in the gizzard first. Swelp me dead, I will!"

"Murder!" cried a wan-faced woman at

the door opposite Paul's room. She had a naked child at her breast, and three other children clung to her skirts, terror-stricken so that they were unable to scream.

All this Paul saw and heard in the few seconds when he stood outside his door. He spoke a sharp word, which was heard by the huddled people on the stairways and by those whose faces peered out of the doors.

"Cowards!"

He caught hold of the man's wrist and throat, just as the fellow flung himself free from the girl, and swayed a moment before trying to stab her.

"Leave him to me," said Paul sternly, as the girl again leaped at the brute like a tiger-cat.

"What the gory devil—" said the man.

In spite of his drunken frenzy he had the sense to see that he was attacked by a new opponent, and exerting all his strength he broke free from Paul's grip, staggered with his back to the wall, and lowered his knife for an upward thrust.

"I'll slice yer!" he said, with a growl of passion; and from behind Paul's back came the cry of "Murder!" from the wan woman at the door, and a deep indrawing of breath from the crowd huddled on the stairways.

They seemed to understand, as Paul understood, that in another second or two this drunken fellow with the flushed face and the glaring eyes would slake his blood-thirst.

Paul was without a weapon against that knife. Unless he could leap aside— He lurched to one side as the man stooped and then sprang with the roar of a beast. But half-way through his spring the knife clattered out of his hand, and he fell like a log, as a swift blow caught him clean between the eyes.

"It's all right, sir," said Jem Brent, breathing rather quickly. "It was a good thing I was close to you."

"Very good!" said Paul. "Thanks!"

He knew that he owed his life to Jem's swift, clean blow. That knife would have ripped him, beyond all doubt.

The woman who had been crying murder now left her doorway and stooped over

the senseless man, with a whimpering sob, peering at his face. Then she turned to Paul and stared at him with a kind of pitiful gratitude in her eyes.

"Thank you kindly, young man! Not but what Jake ain't the best of 'usbands; but 'e gives trouble when 'e's in liquor. It's twice 'e's tried to murder me and all the little uns, pore feller!"

"Yes, and 'e'd 'ave done so, if it 'adn't been fer me, Mrs. Farfitt, and don't you forget it neither!"

These words were spoken by the girl who had been fighting with the man. She was laughing now, as she leaned up against the wall, coiling up her hair, and her bosom was panting beneath her ragged blouse.

"I won't forget it, my dear," said the wan-faced woman. "You was the first to come when I cried for 'elp."

"Oh, Loo!" said another voice. "I was scared to death, that I was. Why can't you get on with yer work, instead of interfering so? You know we're all behind with the boxes."

It was another girl who spoke, and she put her arm round the shoulders of the one who had been fighting, and put her cheek against the other's face in a caressing way. Paul saw by the flicker of the gas-jet that these two young women had a strange resemblance to each other, though one was thin and pale and the other robust and flushed. He saw that they were sisters.

"Oh, stow the boxes!" cried the younger girl, with a laugh. "It ain't every day I've such a chanst of saving a man from being 'ung! Not that any of 'em's worth it. Why, strike me blind, if it 'adn't been for them young fellers 'ere, I should 'ave been cut into sandwiches for a bank 'oliday picnic! The rest of the crowd 'adn't the pluck of a louse!"

She stared down the passage, and as though her scorn had reached them, or as though there were nothing worth waiting for, now that the fight was over, the huddled figures shuffled away, the peering faces disappeared behind closing doors, and the landing was quiet again.

"What shall we do with Mr. Jake?" asked Paul, looking down at the senseless fellow on the floor.

"Well, if you'd be so kind," said the wan-faced woman with the babe at her breast, "you might jest 'eave 'im back into our room. 'E'll lie quiet till the mornin' and wake as cheery as a new-born lamb. 'E's the best of 'usbands when the drink is out of 'im."

"Sure it's safe?" asked Paul. "It would be a pity if he disturbed the house again."

"Oh, Jake's all right," said the girl who had tried to strangle him. "'E'll sleep easy now and wake as fresh as ever. 'Ere, take 'old of 'is bloomin' 'ead, and your friend with the fist can look after his toes."

She gave a gay laugh as Paul and Jem hoisted up the man's prostrate body and carried him into the room to which the woman with the naked baby had led the way.

"Now, you brats," said the woman, "father's come 'ome again, as quiet as mutton, so don't fret no more, but tuck in and go to sleep before I thump you."

Father had come home again! Paul raised his eyebrows at the awful irony of the words. Home! There was hardly space enough to put the man down. The little children crept into the bed where the mother also seemed to sleep with her new-born babe, and on a deal-table which almost filled the room a snoring man lay stretched on a pile of sacking.

"Who's that?" asked Paul.

"That's our lodger, Mr. Brand," said the woman. "'E was that tired 'e only woke and swore a bit while all the row was on."

"Didn't he mind your being murdered—when the row started?" asked Paul.

The woman apologized for the sleeping lodger.

"Well, you see, young man, 'e didn't like to interfere between 'usband and wife. It's best not—and 'e was very tired, pore feller."

The room was strewn with sacking and half-made sacks, which lay in piles on the narrow floor space.

"What firm do you make those for?" asked Paul.

"Whiteleaf's, for sure," said the woman, as though surprised at the question.



"Eightpence a hundred. They takes time, you know."

Paul stared at the coarse sacking and then at the woman's fingers, which were hard and rough and pock-marked with the blunt end of a toiling needle.

"Yes," he said, "I expect they take time. For Whiteleaf's, eh? Well, good night, Mrs. Parfitt. I hope your man will sleep as soundly as your lodger."

"Oh, sure to," said the woman.

She put her hand on his arm and reiterated the fact that Jake was the best of husbands when he wasn't in drink. He had lost a week's work at the yards—Whiteleaf's timber yards—owing to some words with the foreman.

That had made him low-spirited, poor fellow, and the other lads had stood him treat to cheer him up. Jake was very popular with his mates.

Paul went out of the room, and, at the door, Loo, the girl who had saved the man from murder, was waiting with laughing eyes, as though she had found a good joke somewhere.

"Seems to me," she said, "we ought to get a bloomin' medal for life-saving, you and me, young man."

"Yes," said Paul. "You put up a good fight, Miss Loo. It was plucky of you."

She laughed at his words.

"'Ere, put that word down your throat, young feller! My name is Loo Larkin, without no Miss before it. And that is my sister Emmy, otherwise known as Mrs. Gurney, when 'er bloke's at home, which ain't often."

It was the sister who spoke now.

"Ain't you comin' back, deary? There's all them boxes waitin'. If they ain't finished by ter-morrer we shall have to go without a Sunday dinner."

"Scissors!" said Loo Larkin. "I'm tired fit to flop. Blast them poxy boxes and everything else."

In a voice of extreme shrillness she sang the first line of a cockney song:

"I don't care what becomes of me!"

and then she added, as an explanatory note to Paul: "Not if you was to carry me off

to a desert isle and feed me on banana-skins."

Paul gave a glance at Jem, who was standing in his doorway with a boot in one hand and a brush in the other, having resumed his work after the brief diversion.

"Don't wait up for me, lad. I may be back late."

Then he turned to the two girls.

"Look here, supposing I come and lend you a bit of help with those boxes? I'm fairly handy."

Loo looked at him in a queer way beneath her brown lashes and gave a little laughing giggle.

"You're not wanting to borror our droring-room sofer, by any chanst?"

"Nothing of the kind," said Paul.

"Nor yet our grand pianner?" said the girl.

"I just want to help," said Paul.

"My! It would be kind of you!" said the other sister in a hesitating voice. "But—"

"Perhaps I sha'n't be much good at it," said Paul. "Still, I'll have a try. I wouldn't like you to go without your Sunday dinner."

"Emmy," said Loo in a mocking voice, "the young feller wouldn't like us to go without our Sunday dinner!"

"Well, if you'd come this way," said the other girl.

Paul followed the two sisters and went into the room where they lived and worked. It was, for the son of William Whiteleaf, who paid for their labor, a night of new experience.

The two girls shared a room smaller than the one in which Jake had just been laid out with his wife and children and a sleep-stricken lodger. Paul saw that it was furnished with the usual deal-table, on which was littered the material for making cardboard boxes, with a small dresser, on which a few cracked plates and bits of cheap crockery were arranged, a small cooking-stove in the fire-grate, three deal-chairs, and a bedstead in which a small boy lay sleeping with a flushed face.

"Hello!" said Paul. "This young man wasn't disturbed by the noise."

Emmy Gurney, the elder of the two sis-

ters, though she could not have been more than twenty-four years old, bent over the bed and touched the small boy's forehead with a light hand.

"That's my boy," she said. "We call him little Brown Mouse, 'cos of his pretty ways. He's all that makes life worth livin' to me."

"He's a pretty fellow," said Paul, "and looks as if he were a laughing rogue when his eyes were open. Has he got a father anywhere about?"

Emmy, as the mother was called by her younger sister, was silent, but Loo explained the situation frankly and good-humoredly as she swept a pile of cardboard boxes off one of the chairs, dusted it with the end of her petticoat, and placed it for Paul to sit on.

"The neighbors don't ask about Emmy's 'usband when 'e's not at 'ome. It ain't good manners. The reason being, young feller, that Mr. Jonathan Gurney takes frequent 'olidays in 'is majesty's prisons for pinchin' things what don't belong to 'im."

"A professional thief?" asked Paul.

Emmy Gurney nodded.

"He's very clever at the business, so the p'leece tell us. But 'e don't 'ave no kind of luck. 'E's always being took."

"It's carelessness," said Loo. "'E always was a careless young tuft, was Johnny Gurney. But a fair sport, all the same, ain't 'e, Emmy?"

"My boy is very like his pa," said Emmy. "But it gives me the creeps to think he may take to the same ways. I'd rather see him stretched out dead."

Tears welled into her eyes and trickled slowly down her cheek, as she looked at the sleeping child again. But she smiled and gulped down her grief when the younger girl smacked her on the arm and told her not to "carry on."

"Emmy's always carryin' on," she said to Paul. "She ain't got no blimy sense of 'umor, like I 'ave. Thanks be, I allays look on the bright side of things. 'What's the good of 'owling?' is my motter. Now, sit down, Mr. Cough-Drop, and if yer want ter make yerself useful get a start on them boxes, while I make a cup o' tea and rout round for the moldy old biscuits. That

there how-de-do with Jake Parfitt 'as given me no end of a pecker."

She moved round the little room, humming a song while she put a penny in the slot of the gas-meter, filled a tin kettle with water from a broken jug, and collected three of the cracked teacups.

Paul watched her curiously. In spite of her torn blouse, her tousled hair, her ragged old skirt, the beauty of the girl was undeniable, and she had a kind of reckless gaiety which bubbled up into her throat so that she was always singing snatches of music-hall songs, so that not even the misery of this poorly furnished room or the naked poverty which it revealed had crushed out her spirit of youth.

Once or twice she caught Paul's glance and giggled at him in a comical way, as though vastly amused by his presence in the room. Then she dumped down a cup of tea in front of him, stirring it up with a leaden spoon with which she had scraped some condensed milk out of an almost empty tin.

"Put that down yer windpipe, young feller," she said. "It 'll warm yer cockles a bit. And if you've got a name by which your friends know yer when you're at home, p'r'aps you'll spit it out when you feel so inclined."

"Paul," said the owner of the name.

"Paul what?"

"Just Paul. One name is long enough to remember."

"Oh, I'm not inquisitive!" said Loo. "I know many of the boys who like to keep their names private. Paul's good enough for me to catch on to; so Paul, my pretty one, swallow down these swipes and start to work, if you're so minded. These 'ere boxes 'ave got ter be done before the van comes round in the morning. Otherwise little Brown Mouse won't 'ave no dinner in 'is little belly to-morrer."

She pulled out some strips of cardboard, folded them with quick, nimble fingers, and stuck them together with a dab from the glue-pot, while she imparted to Paul in a snatch of song that—

"You'd look sweet  
Upon the seat  
Of a bicycle built for two!"



Paul made his first attempt to fold and stick a cardboard box. It wasn't so easy as it looked.

"Fumble-fingers!" said Loo.

"Oh, you'll soon get into it," said Emmy.

Loo was making boxes with incredible rapidity, and while she worked she sang again:

"Dizy, Dizy, give me your answer, do,  
For I'm 'alf crizy all for the love of you!"

"Won't you wake the boy?" asked Paul, fumbling with the cardboard.

"Not me!" said Loo. "I specs he's dreaming of brandy balls, bless the poor little blighter!"

Then she changed her tune and sang blithely again, in an undertone:

"'Ello, 'ello, 'ello,  
It's a different girl again—  
Different eyes, different nose,  
Different hair, different clothes."

She put her elbows down on the table and gave a little squeal of laughter at Paul's amateur adventures with cardboard boxes.

"You'll never waller in gold at this 'ere job, Percy!"

"Give me a chance!" said Paul.

"Oh, he's getting on nicely," said Emmy. "And I'm sure it's very kind of him."

"Percy was a nice boy,  
Percy was a nut,"

sang Loo.

At the end of twenty minutes Paul had mastered the trick. He was turning out cardboard boxes at a fine rate, to the amazement and delight of Loo, who was pleased to say that he wasn't such a fool as he looked, "not by a long chalk."

"I'll have a race with you," said Paul.

Even out of the miserable monotony of this toil, even with the sickening smell of the glue in their nostrils, these three queer companions in the tiny room of a slum dwelling found their task easier because they made a game of it.

As the half-hours lengthened into hours the floor became piled with boxes. They were working almost silently now, but every now and then Paul would smile across at

Loo, and say, "I beat you that time," as he finished another dozen, or she would give a little giggle of delight at racing ahead of him.

Emmy tired first. Her head drooped upon her breast, and her eyes closed, though she wakened with a start and went on with her work in a mechanical way, as though her fingers could toil without direction from her brain.

But presently she spread out her arms on the table and put her head down on them, and did not stir.

"She always goes off like a giddy peg top," said Loo.

"Do you work like this every night?" asked Paul.

"We works till we flops, and as often as not on hungry stummicks! Sometimes, Percy dear, I'd rather be dead. Strike me blind, I would! What's the good of it all—this blighted cardboard-and-glue game?"

Paul raised his eyebrows.

"I thought you looked on the bright side of life, Miss Loo?"

Her lips quivered, and it seemed as though she could no longer keep on her mask of mirth.

"Oh, I'm bright enough! And I tries to cheer up Emmy. If I didn't laugh sometimes I'd go and drown myself."

She confided to Paul in jerky little sentences broken up by her dabs into the glue-pot, by her swift finger-work with the strips of cardboard, that she had a hankering after the gay life.

Sometimes, when Emmy's husband was in luck, after he had pinched a few watches or broken into a nice house, he stood her treat and gave her a bit of money to buy a new hat with feathers, and a lace blouse, "like a lidy's," and took her to the theaters on the other side of the river. Sometimes they went for a holiday in the country, and she never wanted to come back again. She was as happy as a kid under the open sky with grass under her feet. A rum go! Perhaps it was because of the gipsy blood in her. Her grandmother had been a traveling gipsy in the basket line.

All the same, she liked the town with its lights and crowds and shop windows. There were plenty of girls she knew who

had gone to the bad— Well, they were having a good time while it lasted. Pretty dresses, a bit of jewelry, fine living, gaiety.

Paul leaned forward and stopped his work.

"I wouldn't think of that if I were you. It's better here, with Emmy and little Brown Mouse. You wouldn't sing or laugh if you took to that other way of life, Loo. It's just another name for hell."

"And ain't this hell?" asked the girl. "Ain't it 'ell to 'ave the stink of glue in your nose all your life, to break your back and 'eart over these poxy boxes?"

"It's hard," said Paul. "But you keep your soul clean. It's worth it."

"'Ere, don't preach!" said the girl, rather fiercely. "Emmy does all the preachin'. She's good. If it wasn't for Emmy—and young Bert—"

"Who's Bert?"

Loo's face flushed a little. "Bert's my young man. 'E's daft on me, the silly blighter! But what's the use? I ain't goin' to marry 'im, on 'is fourteen bob a week. When the kids came it would be worse than this."

"Perhaps he'll earn good wages one of these days," said Paul. "Then you'll be glad you waited and kept yourself straight for him."

"I've waited a bit too long," said Loo, very wearily. "One of these days I'll get tired of waiting and slip off to the street of gay ladies. It's only Emmy holds me back—Emmy and young Bert and little Brown Mouse, over there."

"Yes," said Paul, "Emmy would break her heart if you went, and little Brown Mouse couldn't get on without your singing voice. He would miss his playfellow, I expect."

Loo laughed in a shrill voice which made little Brown Mouse stir in his sleep.

"Now, funny-face," said Loo, "don't put your tongue in the glue-pot!"

She put her hand up and dashed away the suspicion of a tear.

"You'd jaw the leg off a table!" she said. "And there's plenty of work to do, ain't there, my little Christian 'ero?"

She began to hum one of her ridiculous

songs again. It was the first line of a ballad entitled "When Father Laid the Carpet on the Stairs." But she did not get very far with it.

Her head drooped, as her sister's had done, she yawned once or twice, and said "Oh, my pore feet!" and then fell asleep, with her head lolling sidewise over the back of the deal-chair, so that Paul could see her white throat and the rise and fall of her bosom beneath the tattered bodice.

Paul looked at his watch. It was four in the morning, but no glimmer of light came through the torn window blind, and there were still many boxes to be made out of the strips of cardboard. He went on with the work, though his body ached with a painful fatigue, and a headache was thumping in his brain, and the sour smell of the glue sickened him. Strange thoughts came into his head, as his fingers folded the damp boards, as he handled the glue-brush, as he dropped each box onto the pile around his chair.

He was thinking of his father's house on the other side of the river, where his people were in their beds while he sat here awake in this slum dwelling, between two sleeping girls, who had been toiling for William Whiteleaf & Sons until they had no more strength.

It was strange that he, one of those sons, one of the heirs to the monstrous fortune which had been founded upon the sweated labor which had enslaved these girls and thousands like them, should be cramped and cold and dog-weary in this small den with its fetid atmosphere which held within its four walls the type of all the wretchedness of women's lives in this world of poverty.

That poor sleeping girl—Loo—with her yearnings toward a gay life as the only alternative to a dreadful drudgery which made even the dark river a temptation to her soul, with a natural gaiety and beauty which even now resisted the squalor and misery of her environment, with a courage which had found expression in a fierce struggle with a drunken brute, with pure instincts which held her back from the easy way which led to the devil's playground, with yearnings for green fields and the open



sky of which she had had brief glimpses on holidays with a professional thief—if she had been born in a higher class, if she had been brought up in a decent home life, this girl would have been a splendid creature, radiating happiness and making the world brighter by her presence.

What a pity that she should be wasted and warped in this soul-destroying slum! What a pity!

And that other girl, the elder sister. She must have been very pretty before she had become faded, pinched, as the mother of a thief's child.

Yet her eyes had brightened as she had stooped over the sleeping boy there. She had not lost the pride of motherhood. And she had spoken tenderly to this sister of hers.

That moment in the passage when she had put her arm about the girl's shoulder and caressed her cheek revealed a motherly love for Loo, the wild one. It was her sense of right and wrong—she was "good," said Loo—which kept the younger girl "straight," and held her back from the allurements of a vicious life.

Emmy, the thief's wife, had the qualities of Christian sanctity, though, perhaps, she knew no more of Christian dogma than a slave woman in pagan Rome.

What miracles there were in Misery Mansions!

Paul Whiteleaf, as a laborer in his father's timber yards, had already come in touch with men who, in spite of blasphemy and coarseness, and brutality and misery, had revealed in many ways the miraculous fact that somewhere within their hearts there burned a little spark of the divine fire of charity.

Out of their wretched wages he had seen them set aside a few coppers to keep a home together when the breadwinner had "gone sick" or lost his job. Only yesterday there had been a "call round" on behalf of a family on the third floor which was threatened with eviction because the mother of five children had fallen behind with her rent, and the landlord had lost his patience, though he seemed a good fellow, not quick to turn out his tenants if they fell into arrears.

Hardly a man in Misery Mansions had failed to give a shilling to that fund, though to many of them that silver piece would mean a week without tobacco, or half rations for several days, or some physical sacrifice not easily suffered. The generosity of the poor was incredible and amazing!

Even the drunkenness of Jake Parfitt was due to the charity of comrades who had treated a man "down on his luck," so that, behind the brutal scene on the landing, there was the spirit of generous hearts, unwise though they had been.

And now, as Paul glanced at the sleeping girls on either side of him, and heard their heavy breathing, he was filled with a tremendous desire to atone still further in his own body and spirit for the starved lives and stunted hopes of all these sisters and brothers of misery, and to find some way by which he might pay back his father's debt to them, and lead them out of the abyss to some land of promise, where for good work they would get good wages, where they might take pleasure and pride in their toil, where they should enjoy some of the sunshine of life, and where the good that was in them should ripen to a natural harvest for the great God to reap.

The first sickly rays of dawn crept through the window-panes, revealing the damp blotches on the walls and the horrid litter in the room, when Paul rose quietly from his chair and stood with blinking eyes and a tight band of pain about his head, after his night's labor.

The last box had been made. He had finished the task which would mean a couple of shillings or so to these two girls and a Sunday dinner for little Brown Mouse.

Loo stirred in her sleep and gave a deep sigh. Her white neck was terribly cricked over the sharp edge of the deal chair.

Paul raised his hand as a kind of farewell to the two weary girls to whom he had lent a helping hand. Then he crept out and went back to his own room.

Jem was there, awake and dressed, and cleaning a pair of boots.

"You ruffian!" said Paul. "Didn't I say I would clean my own boots?"

Jem put his hand on Paul's arm.

"For Heaven's sake, go to bed, sir! You look tired to death."

"I'm tired," said Paul, "but I'm not going to bed, Jem. In another hour I shall have to be off to work. So make some of your extra special cocoa while I put my head in that pail and wash the cobwebs out of my eyes."

Jem shook his head and gazed reproachfully at the white face of his companion.

"If you break down, it will be your own fault, sir. You won't be able to put the blame on poor old Fate. No mortal man can burn the candle at both ends."

"Yes, they can," said Paul. "It's what most of the people are doing on this side of the river. It's their way of life which I have come to share."

Jem stirred the cocoa with a most gloomy expression in his eyes.

"It's the way of death," he said. "And if you don't listen to a word of common sense I shall have to make a coffin out of biscuit boxes."

Paul laughed very heartily as he splashed his face over a pail of water.

"I've no doubt it would be a first-class coffin, Jem."

Then he stared at the door which had been left ajar. It was opening in a stealthy way, and presently the shock-head of a small boy appeared, with inquisitive brown eyes which seemed in search of a joke.

"Hello!" said Jem, who had just dumped a jam-pot on the table. "Who's this?"

The inquisitive brown eyes of the small boy roved about the room and came to rest on the jam-pot.

"Why, it's little Brown Mouse!" said Paul. "Come in, my lad, and make yourself at home. Jem, let me introduce you to Brown Mouse, who sleeps while his mother works and while his aunty sings."

The boy's head disappeared shyly behind the door, but the lure of the jam-pot was too strong for him, and when Jem held out a spoonful of red jelly he came a step forward with a finger in his mouth.

"I'm Emmy's kid," he said, as though desiring to complete the introduction. "I'm awful gone on jam."

"Well, get your tongue round it," said Jem, holding out the spoon.

A few moments later the bond of friendship between the ex-footman and little Brown Mouse was sealed with a sticky kiss implanted upon Jem's left cheek, and from that moment they were chums who understood each other perfectly. For among the other talents revealed in a man who had disclosed his human nature after taking off his livery was the gift of friendship with the children of life.

It was amazing what tunes Jem could produce from a penny whistle which he played in the courtyard on Saturday afternoons, surrounded, like the *Pied Piper*, with a crowd of small urchins, among whom little Brown Mouse was the merriest.

Not even Paul's fairy tales, which he told to groups of big-eyed boys and girls who had never before met such heroes of history as *Jack the Giant-Killer*, *Hop-o'-My Thumb*, and *Puss in Boots*, could displace Jem of the Penny Whistle as first favorite in the affections of the juvenile population of Misery Mansions, and especially in the heart of little Brown Mouse, who seemed to find some special bond of sympathy in the character of a man who presided over a three-pound jam-jar, who made extraordinarily fine toffee on an oil-stove, and who answered the innumerable questions of an inquiring mind with great gravity and patience.

Jem himself was proud of Brown Mouse's loyal friendship, and the company of this curly-head with a grubby face brightened up his spirits whenever he was threatened with that enemy which he called the almighty hump. For in Misery Mansions the man and the boy went hand in hand on great adventures and made a game of life, until the magic piping of the penny whistle lost its tune for a while.

### CHAPTER III.

#### AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

**D**URING the luncheon hour at the factory, while Paul was learning the character of his father's "hands," and their way of life, it was his habit to



eat a quick meal and then take a slogging walk for the sake of fresh air and exercise.

As a rule, he went as far away as possible from the Whiteleaf works and offices, but one day he changed his direction and walked past the iron gates which led to the building in which his brother Matthew conducted the business of the firm.

Suddenly he turned, for he caught sight of a carriage standing outside the gates, and recognized the livery of the coachman. It was one of his father's carriages, and as he looked toward it a girl put her head out of the window and called to him.

"Paul! Paul!"

It was his sister Margaret, and his heart gave a leap at the sight of her.

He strode across the road and took hold of the hands which she stretched out to him, and kissed them.

"Why, Margaret, what on earth are you doing on this side of the river?"

For a moment or two she could not answer. There were tears in her eyes, though she was smiling, and she looked at Paul, in his workman's clothes, with pity and emotion.

"Oh, Paul! I hoped I should see you! Father has come to go into some accounts with Matthew, and Christopher and I are waiting for him."

"What! Is old Kit there, too?"

Paul looked inside the carriage, and saw his brother sitting in the corner, immaculately dressed as usual, and smoking a cigarette.

He stared at Paul with a comical grimace, not unmingled with disgust, at the sight of his corduroy suit.

"Hello, young fellow! Disguised yourself as an anarchist, haven't you? Can't say I admire your taste."

Paul turned quickly.

"It's not unbecoming," he said. "Many honest fellows dress like this."

Then he opened the carriage door.

"Make room for a little one. And, Kit, give me one of those cigarettes of yours. I can't resist the scent of it."

Margaret's hands were about his arm, hugging him. Christopher handed over his cigarette case with the tips of his fingers

and shifted as far away as possible from his brother.

"Look here," he said. "Blood's thicker than water, and all that, but I don't want to catch the smallpox or anything, and these clothes of yours look as if they might be infected with all kinds of microbes on the prowl."

"Besides, you're playing a fool's game, Paul, and I don't approve of your behavior at all. The governor's fairly broken up."

"He'll get over it," said Paul cheerfully, "One of these days he will come round to my way of thinking, and rejoice because I stood out against him."

"But what are you doing?" asked Christopher, irritably. "What on earth are you doing, my dear chap? I don't want to quarrel with you—you and I have always been good pals—and if you were getting any kind of sport out of this queer game, I shouldn't say a word."

"Anything that kills the boredom of life and provides a little amusement is worth any man's while. But you can't tell me that you're enjoying yourself, or doing anything sensible."

"That is where you are wrong," said Paul. "I am enjoying myself vastly, and I am learning a great deal of useful knowledge. I am learning the meaning of sweated labor, of poverty in its nakedness, and of human suffering and patience."

"What's the good of knowing that?" asked Christopher angrily, and throwing his cigarette through the carriage window.

"Any damned fool knows there's a lot of misery in the world, and the wisest thing to do is to turn our eyes away from it to more agreeable sights. Don't you agree, Margaret?"

Paul looked at his sister whimsically.

"I bet she doesn't," he said.

"No," said Margaret. "One ought to know. It's only by facing these things that one can make them better. Paul is right there."

"One to me!" said Paul. "Margaret understands, as she always did. And your philosophy won't work, Chris. You may turn your eyes away to more agreeable sights, but the day may come when all these people of poverty will come out of

their lairs and stand in front of you, and make you look at them while their hands are about your throat.

"That won't be an agreeable sight! And it's coming, Kit. The people have been very patient, but their patience is giving out. It's at the last gasp.

"Unless people like ourselves prove to them that we want to help them, and deal with them fairly, and raise them out of all this mire, they will go for us and smash us. I can feel it. The spirit of revolt is in the air."

"And you are trying to foster it!" said Christopher bitterly. "You know you're going to do your damndest to hurry things up."

Paul laughed.

"I'm not going to adopt the policy of sitting on the lid, certainly. That's the way to produce a big explosion.

"I am going to act as one of the safety-valves. As soon as my plans are ready I am going to offer myself as a leader to the sweated laborers."

"If I had any pluck I would pitch you out of the carriage," said Christopher. "It's like your infernal cheek to come and sit down with us, as if you were still part of the family, instead of a renegade."

He spoke hard words, but there was a look in his eyes which belied them. He could not resist a glance of admiration at this young brother of his, who showed so much self-confidence in his adventure, who was so amazingly cheerful, though he had put on the clothes of a workingman and adopted a wretched way of life.

"It's splendid to have Paul next to us again!" said Margaret. "I don't want to let him go again."

"There will be the devil of a row if the governor catches him here," said Christopher, chuckling at the thought. "And as for Matthew, he will have an apoplectic stroke."

Margaret seemed scared at the thought.

"Yes," she said, "you must go before they come out, Paul. We mustn't have a scene."

"That's all right," said Paul. "Give me a few minutes longer."

His few minutes lengthened out. He

could not drag himself away from this brother and sister of his, from whom he had cut himself off for the sake of a great adventure.

It was a joyful thing to see Margaret's pretty face again, to hold her hands in his, to tease her about the lovers whom she would not accept. He had a thousand questions to ask about his mother, and old friends, and the way of life on the other side of the river.

Then suddenly he saw his father coming through the iron gates. He was leaning heavily on Matthew's arm, and looked tired and gloomy.

"Time to go," said Paul.

He kissed his sister, gripped Christopher's hand, and then jumped out of the carriage, and stood holding open the door as his father and Matthew approached.

Matthew was staring on the ground moodily. He did not glance in Paul's direction. The old man only gave a glance at the young man in working clothes who stood at the carriage door.

"Thanks, my lad," he said.

It was only when he fumbled in his pocket for a copper that Paul's laugh startled him.

"Don't bother about that, father!" said Paul.

Matthew jerked his head up at the sound of that voice, and William Whiteleaf staggered back as though he had been stabbed. For a few moments there was an intense silence.

It was broken by Margaret, who spoke quickly and seriously.

"Father! Paul is only doing what he thinks best. He loves you just as much as ever."

The old man turned his back on his son and stepped heavily into the carriage.

"Drive on!" he said in a harsh voice.

But Matthew was still standing on the cinder path. He stared at Paul, and gave a bitter laugh.

"So here is the play-actor again! Haven't you tired of the game yet?"

"No!" said Paul. "I am only just beginning, and I don't get tired quickly."

"That is a good thing," said Matthew, "because you'll be pretty sick before you



have done. Then you will come whining back again."

"I rather fancy," said Paul, "that you will have to do the whining, Matthew. But the future will have to decide between us. Meanwhile, give my love to the mater."

"You can go to the devil before I soil my lips with your name!" said Matthew.

Paul had the last word. It was a friendly one.

"I won't trouble you then, for the devil's way is on the other side of the river, and I am staying here. Margaret will give my message."

Matthew stepped inside the carriage and slammed the door.

"Drive on!" said William Whiteleaf again.

But before the carriage moved away he stole a glance at his son, and their eyes met. There was a look of anguish in his glowering eyes, as though his rage had been killed by grief because the son whom he had loved best had forsaken him.

Margaret's hand waved back to Paul as he stood on the curbstone with his hat in his hand.

"I must get back to my work," said Paul, when the carriage had disappeared.

After all, he was his father's workman, for the sake of the family honor. That thought kept him cheerful.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### TWO OLD FRIENDS.

IT was in "The Market"—a narrow street running parallel with the docks and wharves, and lined on either side with wooden stalls and barrows—that Paul met an old friend of his. It was Miss Lizzie Legg, who had once twined her fingers about his throat in the library of his father's house.

It was on a Saturday night, and as he walked home to Trump's Buildings, after a long day in the factory, he felt faint with hunger, having given his money to a poor devil down on his luck, so that he had gone without lunch.

He laughed as he tightened in his belt, but for the first time in his life he knew

the real meaning of hunger—the sharp agony of it, the hurt of it, so that his nostrils quivered at the smell of raw meat.

Yet, curiously, he gained a kind of spiritual pleasure out of his pain. It was satisfying to the strange desire of his spirit to suffer as much as those among whom he walked.

"I am hungry," he thought, "but for the first time. These people who are my father's hands have been hungry thousands of times."

He plunged farther into the market, as though by getting into the heart of the stifling crowd he could get nearer to their life, closer to their squalor.

The faces of the crowd put a spell upon him, so that he forgot even his hunger for a time. In these pale, blanched faces of women with shawls wrapped round their heads and shoulders, he read the story of such lives as those which he had seen in Misery Mansions, where Loo Larkin and Emmy Gurney were making cardboard boxes in the odor of glue-pots.

In the hungry look of the men who were trying to "beat down" the price of the hawkers he saw the savage instincts, the sullen despair, of men like Alf Staggers, the man with the withered hand.

He could see no withered limbs about the barrows and booths to-night, but in the crowd tempted by bad meat, and over-ripe fruit and stale vegetables, the refuse of other markets across the river, he saw withered hearts and withered souls.

Then suddenly, as he stood by a booth, listening to the hoarse shouts of a hawker, he came face to face with Lizzie Legg. He recognized her instantly as their eyes met.

"Why, Lizzie," he said, "it's good to see you looking so well! How is the world treating you?"

She fell back a little, and then grabbed him by the arm.

"Blind me!" said the girl, gasping as though she had had a shock which had taken the breath out of her body. "It's the same face and the same v'ice."

"The same as what?" asked Paul.

"The same as old Whiteleaf's son what I met in a big 'ouse on the other side of the river."

"It's the same man," said Paul. "How are you, Lizzie, and how's Alf? I told you we should meet again one of these fine days."

The girl shrank from him a little. She seemed afraid of him, as though he were really a ghost.

"What are you playing at?" she asked. "What's your game, mister?"

"No game," said Paul. "I've had a little quarrel with my father. I think you and Alf were partly the cause of it."

"So now I'm living in Trump's Buildings, otherwise known as Misery Mansions, and I'm as hungry as a hunter, having spent every penny of my week's wages."

The girl gave a shrill, high-pitched laugh.

"Your week's wages! 'Ere, don't go kidding me, mister. I ain't got no more than two legs to be pulled."

"I'm not joking with you, Lizzie," said Paul. "I'm telling you the truth. I'm down on my luck, like a good many other men in this part of the world."

"And it's a funny thing—I feel a bit queer."

He felt astonishingly queer. A sudden faintness made his senses swoon. There was a weakness about his knees so that he felt as if his limbs were giving way beneath him.

It was lucky that there was a blank wall behind him so that he could lean up against it, smiling in a foolish way, and passing the back of his hand in a limp, uncertain manner across his forehead to wipe away some beads of moisture which had risen there.

He couldn't see Lizzie for a moment. There was a curtain before his eyes, dotted with little points of reddish light.

He had gone hungry too long, and he had been working too hard on an empty stomach. It was a nuisance. How could he get back to Misery Mansions?

Lizzie Legg was staring at him. She seemed to understand what was the matter with him. Perhaps she had felt like that herself and knew the meaning of the weakness.

She gripped his arm and supported him against her shoulder.

"Eh, Mr. Whiteleaf, you look awful

bad, you do! Now come along with me, and rest a bit in a little pub which ain't no more than ten yards away."

He could not resist her. He was so absurdly weak and dizzy that but for the strength of her arm he would have fallen in the roadway.

He was dimly conscious of being jostled by the crowd, and of being dragged by Lizzie through a narrow doorway into a warm room filled with the stale reek of beer and tobacco. From a thousand miles away he heard Lizzie ask for "two drops o' gin," and then he felt the clatter of a glass between his teeth and heard Lizzie's voice saying:

"Drink it down, mister. It 'll do you no end of good."

He drank down a fiery liquid which burned his throat. Oh, it was foul in its taste, but with a magic power!

A wonderful warmth suffused his limbs, giving them new strength, and, as though a curtain had lifted from his eyes and brain, he could see clearly and think clearly again.

"Thanks, Lizzie. It's splendid of you! But I've no money to pay for this elixir of life. Not a brass farthing."

She laughed, with a catch in her throat, and said she had more than a bleeding shilling in her purse, and if she had nothing at all, would sell her blighted chemise to pay back a gentleman who had been very good to her and to young Alf.

But she couldn't understand how a great toff like he was could have gone so deep into the muck. It knocked her silly, it did.

"Look here, Lizzie," said Paul; "don't you go and tell any one. It's a secret between you and me. Promise?"

She promised solemnly, and swore that she would rather tear her bleeding tongue out than tell a living soul.

His question about the man who had come one night with Lizzie Legg into his father's library was answered by the sudden appearance of that remarkable individual himself.

He came through the swing door of the public-house and stood looking round the bar, as though searching for some one, while Lizzie shrank farther into the dark



corner, and put her hand on Paul's arm as though to caution him.

The man had changed. Obviously some good fortune had happened to him since that night when his rags and his dirt had been a strange contrast to the splendor of William Whiteleaf's house.

There was no longer a stubble of beard on his chin. His bowler hat had a good, sound brim to it. His boots were almost new. He had the appearance of a respectable salesman, or a commercial traveler in some small line of business, except that his eyes were still furtive, and there were sullen lines about his mouth.

He put his withered hand up to his lips as though they were parched, and then, as he turned sharply on his heels, saw Lizzie Legg sitting with a stranger whom he did not recognize.

Instantly an ugly look hardened his face, and there was the glint of a jealous rage in his eyes. He came across to Lizzie and scowled at her.

"So that's your little game, is it, my gal? Thought you'd given me the slip, didn't you? Thought you'd try a new pal for a change, eh?"

"Stow yer bloomin' gab!" said Lizzie. "Can't yer see who the gentleman is?"

"Gentleman!" said Alf Staggers. "I'll put my fist in 'is face if 'e don't clear out."

Paul laughed and held out his hand.

"Hello, Alf," he said; "don't you remember me?"

The man stared at him and started, as though a wasp had stung him.

"What! Ol' Whiteleaf's son?"

He thrust back his bowler hat with his withered stump of a hand, and a strange expression of suspicion, mingled with fear, reminded Paul of the time when this man could not believe that he would be let off, scot free, after being caught as a burglar.

"Sit down to the table, Alf, my lad," said Paul. "I promised I would come to see you one day, and here I am, with Lizzie playing the fairy godmother."

The man lurched into a chair.

"It's a rum go!" he said. "I can't believe my blinkin' eyes. What's brought you to this side of the river in them clothes?"

It was Lizzie who answered.

"The gentleman is 'aving a look round, Alf. Seeing things for 'isself. 'Ow the pore live, and 'The Romance of the Hunder-world.' Like they do on the movin' pictures."

She giggled and then jerked Paul's arm and said:

"Drink another drop, lovey. What are *you* going to 'ave, Alf, my little cock-spar-rer?"

Alf Staggers ordered himself a glass of beer and paid for it out of a silver piece.

"You're looking prosperous," said Paul. "Where did you find your luck?"

"I've gone into politics," said the man. "I'm trying to 'elp my fellow creatures."

He swallowed something in his throat, and spoke with pride and self-satisfaction, but scowled again when Lizzie burst out laughing.

"Yus," she said; "you can see our Alf every Saturday night at the street corner down by the Yeller Jug, which is my place of business where I clean the floors and wash out the spittoons for seven bob a week. I've chucked the box factory, my dear."

"And it's a fair treat to see Mr. Staggers perched up on a biscuit box, like a cock on a dunghill, with a red flag over his 'and-some 'ead."

"'We won't be slaves! Fair wages for honest work! No more sweated labor!' Them's Alf's motters, and, my word, 'e's a fine flow of lip, 'e 'as!"

Alf Staggers smiled in a secretive way and sipped his beer.

"One of these days there'll be a big strike in Mr. William Whiteleaf's works," he said, glancing at Paul. "And it won't be a child's game, neither."

"Glad to hear it," said Paul. "But how do you make your livin', my lad?"

"You can't make money by standing on a biscuit box and telling men to go strike. It would be too easy."

"Think so?" said Alf Staggers. "It ain't so easy to be the secretary of a workin'men's club. Ten shillings a week is what I get for the job, and it don't leave me much time for playing polo and social life."

"Still, I don't complain. I'm beginning to make things move. It's a job what suits me."

"Oh, it does Alf a bit of orl right!" said Lizzie. "But all this yap about strikes is just my eye and my elbow. 'Ow can the boys and girls go on strike wivout no union and no funds?"

"There ain't no blinkin' sense in it. 'Ere, suck up a drop more, mister!"

Paul sipped up some more of the fiery liquid. It seemed to sharpen his wits on some intellectual grindstone. He was thinking with wonderful speed and clarity.

"It's a funny thing, Alf—I was thinking of organizing a strike myself. I must have a long talk with you, Alf. I want to get hold of a man to stir up the factory hands and the home-workers."

"You and I will work together. We'll have something to say to William Whiteleaf & Sons. If they won't pay better wages, we'll want to know the reason why."

"As for funds, I think I know how we can get over that difficulty. Oh, yes, it's a glorious idea! It appeals to my sense of humor!"

Alf Staggers was suspicious and hostile.

"You won't see the fun of it when we gets to work, mister. You and your precious family will laugh on the wrong side of their faces. I tell you straight."

"And I ain't goin' ter give myself away to one of the Whiteleaf breed. I'm not such a blasted fool as that!"

But Paul ignored his words, and laughed with an enormous sense of enjoyment. It was marvelous how his spirits were soaring up on strong pinions which exalted his imagination.

It was strange how comical life seemed in this cozy corner of an evil-smelling public-house. He drained his glass to the dregs, and then stood up and spoke rather solemnly to Lizzie Legg.

"My dear," he said, "I sha'n't forget your kindness. You have paid me back a thousand times for that little meal we had together on the other side of the river. You must bring Alf Staggers to tea at Trump's Buildings. I live at No. 80, on the fifth floor. Can you remember that?"

Lizzie Legg said she wasn't likely to for-

get. But he was "a fair coughdrop," all the same. She had an idea she was dreaming.

And Paul Whiteleaf had an idea he was dreaming when he had said good-by to Lizzie and slapped Alf Staggers on the shoulder and walked back to Misery Mansions. As soon as he got into the fresh air he was conscious of an utter lack of control in his lower limbs.

They were behaving in the strangest fashion so that he could not walk straight, and had an irresistible desire to lurch up against every lamp-post, and to collide with every passer-by. It was utterly ridiculous.

The pavement seemed like a rough sea with enormous waves, so that he had to step high to climb these mountains of asphalt and then plunge down into the valleys.

He began to sing a little song to himself in a dreamy way while he staggered along the pathway. He was aware that men and women were staring at him, grinning at him. One man called out to him:

"Steady, there, old mate!"

Paul leaned up against the next lamp-post and laughed. It was enormously funny to think that he had lost control of his legs, and that his head was spinning round like a teetotum.

Then he became very serious quite suddenly, and whispered a few words in a terror-stricken way:

"Good Lord! I'm drunk— Yes, that's what it is. I'm drunk!"

It took him half an hour to reach Trump's Buildings, otherwise known as Misery Mansions, though they were only a quarter of a mile away. To climb up those five flights of stairs was an adventure full of peril to a man who had no control over his lower limbs.

But at last he banged at the door of No. 80, and waited while he held on to a wall which seemed to slip away from him. The door was opened by James Brent. He stared at Paul's white face, at his physical collapse, and then gasped out a question:

"What's the matter, sir?"

"Jem," said Paul Whiteleaf, "I'm drunk. I've got down to the level of the brutes."



"I'm dead drunk with a glass of bad gin on an empty stomach. I'm as drunk as a beast."

He staggered forward, clutched hold of Jem's arm, and burst into silly tears. Even in his drunkenness the degradation of his state shamed him.

Jem did not make any inquiries into the cause of this mental and physical collapse. With strong arms, yet as tenderly as a woman with an ailing child, he put Paul to bed, took off his boots, loosened his collar and tie, and made a cup of strong coffee, which, with the masterful air of a hospital nurse, he lifted to the lips of a young man who was wondering how he could keep his brain from spinning like a joy wheel which had lost its sense of humor.

"Drink this, sir, and it will kill the poison which is playing Old Harry with your head. And if you will take my advice, you'll get outside half a dozen of these biscuits.

"The last time I was took like that—it was on a bank holiday, I remember—I swamped the beer with a beefsteak. If you'll shut your eyes a bit the chairs won't dance a tango with the table.

"Yes, that's better. Keep your head well back. Try to think of a bit of poetry. It will take your thoughts off the dancing devils.

"I'll open the window and keep the door ajar. There's nothing like fresh air for a case like this."

Two hours later, when the fumes had passed off, he sat on the side of the bed and made an *apologia pro vita sua*.

"Jem," he said, "I've learned another lesson. I've been down far enough to know how easy it is for poverty to make brutes of men.

"The other night when Jake was fighting with Loo Larkin, I despised him as something lower than humanity. To-day I was on a level with Jake the drunkard. It has taken my pride down a peg, thank God."

"These little accidents will happen, sir," said Jem in his quiet, philosophical way. "It's good for a man to get drunk once in his life. It makes him more human, and breaks up his conceit a bit.

"Still, it was a bit of carelessness on your part, sir. If you hadn't let yourself go hungry so long it wouldn't have made you feel so queer."

"That was Jake's excuse, too," said Paul. "It's the excuse for all the people here who behave like brutes.

"Hunger and despair are the devil's twin sisters. I don't wonder so many of these poor devils take to drink."

He rose from the bed on which he had been sitting and paced up and down the bare boards of the wretched little room which had become his home.

Then he halted, and put his hand on Jem's shoulder.

"Old man, I've learned the meaning of hunger, so my experience has not been in vain. I know now that men get drunk very quickly when there's nothing to line their stomachs. And for the sake of all the hungry people in this slum world I'm going to start a scheme to provide them with cheap and wholesome food."

These words were the beginning of that great scheme to provide penny meals for the people which for the next six months was to absorb the energies and call forth the organizing ability of James Brent, ex-footman, acting with the advice and financial support of Paul Whiteleaf, workman on fourteen shillings a week. But before the People's House had opened its doors to the hungry legions, Paul had made more friends among the children of adversity.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE HUMAN COMEDY.

IT was some little time after the scene on the fifth floor when Jem's knockout blow had saved Paul from an ugly knife wound that Loo Larkin brought round Jake Parfitt to make his apology for the little trouble that had happened.

"'E's that shy," said Loo, "that 'e wouldn't 'ave come if I hadn't lugged 'im by the flapper. Ain't you, Jake?"

Jake admitted that he had "a kind of feeling" against intruding into other people's rooms before he'd been asked; but all the same he would like to thank two

young fellows who had been very civil to him when he was a bit out of sorts. He took it very kindly of the young man—pointing to Jem—who, if he had been told the truth, had knocked him down in the very nick of time.

"Don't mention it, old man," said Jem, coloring up a little at this unexpected compliment to his left fist.

"The fact is, mates," said Jake, shuffling his feet a little, and spitting on the bare boards, "I'm as 'armless as a Tom kitten when I'm off the drink; but when I've 'ad a drop, or maybe two, I'm likely to get nasty in my temper."

Loo, who had her hands on her hips, gave a little shriek of mirth.

"Nasty temper ain't the langwidge for it!" she cried, giving Jake a friendly thump on the shoulder. "You're a roarin' devil, old dear. Ain't 'e, Paul?"

"He's just a little playful," said Paul, with a smile at the man who had behaved like a gorilla in the passage. "But give my love to Emmy, and leave Jake and me to have a yarn together, do you mind?"

Though he spoke politely and persuasively, the girl fired up at his words.

"Oh, I don't stay where I'm not wanted. Good evening, Mr. Nose-in-the-air, and mind your own bloomin' business while I mind mine."

She flounced out of the room, banging the door after her.

"A fine gal," said Jake in a thoughtful way when she had gone. "A very fine gal, mate, and a fair plucked un."

He assured Paul that if it hadn't been for Loo Larkin he would have murdered his wife and children as sure as fate. He always felt like murder when his temper got nasty after a drop of drink.

"Perhaps you don't understand the feeling, mate?" he asked rather wistfully. "You're one of the quiet coves. I reckon you've never been the worse for booze."

"You're wrong," said Paul, "I was drunk only last night. As drunk as a beast."

"Was you indeed?" said Jake, with a certain relief in his voice, as though this admission gave him a fellow feeling with his new friend.

"Yes," said Paul, "but I learned a lesson from it."

He clapped his hand on Jake's shoulder and looked him squarely in the eyes.

"It's a foolish game, isn't it, old man?"

Jake scratched his head in a doubtful kind of way.

"There ain't much sense in it, covey. But what's a fellow to do, when the feeling comes on and catches 'im by the throat?"

"Strangle it," said Paul. "Surely you and I are strong enough to get the better of a weakness like that? You're a stronger man than I am, Jake Parfitt, but I'll make a fair offer to you."

"If you'll promise to knock off the drink, I will. That would be a help to both of us. The first man to give in would be ashamed of himself. What do you say?"

Jake was astounded. But he couldn't deny that it was a sporting offer. It would be better for the wife and kids, anyhow.

If Paul was talking fair and square as man to man, he would smoke a pipe over it. Before two pipes had been smoked in a foul little clay which warmed Jake's nose, he accepted the bargain and shook hands on it.

Sitting back after that compact, facing Paul, without a guess that this new "pal" of his was a man of a different class, Jake was moved to open his heart to a young man who seemed to understand things, and who was one of the "quiet coves," though not a preacher at street corners who ranted about the ways of God without understanding the ways of men.

Jake had married as a boy of eighteen. He was now only twenty-eight, with four children and an ailing wife. Life was a bit too hard for him, and it hurt him most when the little ones cried for food and he could buy no bread for them.

That was what tempted him to pour fire down his throat, and made him think devilishly of murder.

As a lad he had been ambitious. He was very handy with his pencil, and had got prizes for drawing and designs in the evening classes.

But what was the use? He had to go into the Whiteleaf timber yards as a day laborer, and now he was in danger of los-



ing even that job, owing to words with the foreman, Larry Hubbard, who was as hard as nails.

"I'm losing 'eart, mate," said Jake. "My pluck's about gone. If I'm turned off the timber yards there's nothing left but the work'ouse, and I'd rather be down and under."

Paul put his hand on the man's shoulder again, and spoke with emotion in his voice.

"Keep your pluck! It's the one thing that no man can steal from you. If you've got that in your heart, you can still put up a fight against the worst of luck. Did you say your foreman's name was Larry Hubbard?"

"Why, I fancy I can make it square with him. It was only the other day I saved him from a falling log. He owes me something for that. Isn't that a bit of luck?"

It was, and when, after a visit to the formidable Larry Hubbard, who was not so hard as he looked, Jake Parfitt was reinstated at the yards, the man's gratitude was like that of a faithful dog. He came round and wrung Paul by the hand silently, while he spat on the floor to hide his emotion.

Then he shuffled his feet, and after coughing huskily, jerked out an awkward sentence or two.

"About that booze business, mate. I've sworn off it, after what you said. I ain't broken down yet. 'Ave you done any pub-crawling lately?"

"No fear!" said Paul cheerily. "I'm not going to be the first to give in."

It was the beginning of a stanch friendship, and before long Jake Parfitt was able to give Paul a friendly hint of impending peril, which had to do with Loo Larkin and a young man named Bert, who had once walked out with her.

## CHAPTER VI.

### LOVE AND THE REAPER.

**A**FTER that night when Paul had helped the two sisters in the opposite room to complete their weekly average of cardboard boxes, Loo Larkin

had become very "chummy," as she called it, with the two young men whom she seemed to regard as innocent and helpless babes in a rough-and-tumble world.

"I can't abide to see male animals do wimmen's work," she said, and after that declaration she invaded their rooms at least twice a week with a mop-broom and a pail of water, and, in spite of Jem's protests, proceeded to scrub the floor with a cheerful energy which flushed her face, while she sang the latest music-hall songs in a loud voice that was not at all unpleasant, in spite of its high-pitched notes.

Her methods of floor-cleaning were elementary, but effective. She tipped up the pail, so that the water swilled across the bare boards and trickled out of the door on to the landing, and then, with her skirts tucked up, and her shoes going slipperty-slop, swept back the tide until it went flowing down the stone stairs.

"I may be low-down," she said, "and the old devil's got 'is leery eye on me, but nobody 'as ever caught me napping like a dirty slut."

Wherefore, with a flourish of a wet broom, which scattered water-drops on Paul's books, and splashed the pictures on the walls, she announced in her singing voice that

"Bill's gone balmy,  
Father's on the booze,  
Mother's pickin' oakum  
To be an 'angman's noose.  
Oh, 'ow 'appy an' grand  
Is our life at 'ome!  
It's better to die as a fact'ry 'and  
Than live as the Pope of Rome!"

At times her curiosity overcame her industry, and, dropping her broom, she would wander about the two rooms, examining the pictures and photographs and reading the titles of the books on the shelves which Jem had constructed out of biscuit boxes.

It was after one of these campaigns of curiosity that she confided to Paul certain grave doubts which had entered her head as to his moral character and mysterious past.

"Young-feller-me-lad," she said, coiling up the brown locks which were continually evading the control of two rusty hairpins,

"I've been thinking that you and Silent Jemmy, over there, 'ave done something to get on the wrong side of the gents in blue. You don't 'appen to 'ave murdered any one, 'ave you?"

"What makes you think that, Loo?" asked Paul, who was making some peculiar experiments in the sink with some evil-smelling chemicals and the lead glaze which gave a polish to the Whiteleaf pottery and many kinds of sickness to the Whiteleaf potters.

"Well," said Loo, "I've eyes in my 'ead, 'aven't I, as well as ear-'oles which can tell the different sounds of words? It's easy to see you young fellers 'ave been toffs in your time.

"You don't speak the lingo of these parts. 'It's awfully kind of you, my dear girl. Thanks very much.' Blind me! We don't speak through a mincing machine in Misery Mansions!"

"I'm glad to hear it," said Paul, amused by the girl's ridiculous imitation of cultured speech. "What else have you been discovering?"

"Them books," said Loo. "The boys on this side of the river don't read books with gilt-edge bindings. 'Comic Chips' is good enough for them."

She took down one or two of the volumes and read their titles. "Hemerson's Hessayss. The Complete Works of Shakespeare. 'Orace."

She opened the pages of the last book, remarking that she once knew a nice young feller of the name of 'Orace. He used to come round with the milk until he was run in for watering it too much.

Then she drew a deep breath, and said, "Gor' blimy, it's in a furrin lingo! Yiddish, by the look of it!" It seemed to give her a new idea.

"'Ere, you never told me you was a Jew, young man."

"I'm not," said Paul, who was still mixing his evil-smelling chemicals. "That's Latin, my girl."

"Lating! Oh, strike me pink! That settles it, then."

"Settles what?"

"You've been a toff," said Loo, in a severe voice, as though making a grave accu-

sation. "It's only toffs what can read Lating.

"You're in 'iding, that's what you are, my kipper, and Silent Jemmy, 'as cut and run with you."

"Well, don't tell the neighbors," said Paul.

Loo was hurt by the suggestion that she might tell anybody.

"If you'd ten skellingtons in your chest o' drawers I wouldn't give you away. I don't split on my pals, young feller.

"No, not if your portrait was in all the papers, with a full description and an 'undred pounds reward."

"I believe you," said Paul. "But rest easy in your mind, Loo. I haven't cut anybody into mince-meat. And as for Silent Jemmy, he wouldn't hurt a fly.

"We're two young men that have come down on our luck, and we're very glad to have a good friend like you to give us a helping hand."

"Cheese it!" said Loo. "If I could lend you a 'elping 'and it would save you a tidy bit o' brass."

Without being asked for her advice, she appointed herself instructor of life and labor to Paul Whiteleaf, pitying his ignorance.

That is to say, she lay in wait for him when he went out shopping, so that she might tell him where to buy in the cheapest market, carried off his flannel shirts and woolen socks so that she might mend and darn them in the intervals of box-making, and, at her own expense, roughly refusing any repayment, provided a tin of insect-powder to keep at bay the troublesome creatures which crowded out of the cracks in the woodwork and plaster on warm nights.

Paul found a real pleasure in the friendship of this strange girl whose high spirits alternated with fits of black despair, but who had qualities of loyalty and truthfulness and courage and tenderness which redeemed all her coarseness and vulgarity.

She was the feminine influence in his life at this period of his spiritual progress, which most men of imagination and sensibility need in their way through the world, and he tried to repay her by little treats



now and then, which she enjoyed with the delight of a child. On more than one Saturday afternoon he took her to a picture palace, for which he had saved up a few coppers out of his week's wages, and it amused him to hear her shrieks of laughter at the comic films, to see the luxury of her sobs and tears at sentimental dramas of heroic cowboys and romantic sweethearts, and to watch the rapt expression on her face when pictures of "high life" with lovely ladies and elegant men in marble halls and spacious palaces were flung upon the screen.

Losing all sense of self-consciousness, she would seize his hand and squeeze it tightly at thrilling moments, and more than once used his coat-sleeve as her pocket-handkerchief when emotion got the better of her.

But there were times, especially during the "social" dramas on the screen, when he doubted the good effect of these cinematograph exhibitions upon this impressionable young creature. They made her yearn for luxuries beyond her reach, and she hinted at the possibility of going in search of that "gay life" which was always a lurking temptation in the background of her imagination.

"Bust me!" she said. "If I was to chuck boxmaking and go to the devil, I might wear frocks like that lidy in the picture. Not 'arf! Why shouldn't I? That's what I want to know. I ain't so ugly in the mug as some of the girls what does it."

Paul patted her hand.

"You're beautiful now," he said, "because you've kept your heart clean. But if you went to the devil you would be as ugly as sin, which is the ugliest thing in the world. You wouldn't be a pal of mine any longer, Loo."

These words seemed to have an emotional effect upon her.

"I was only a kidding of you," she said, very meekly.

Paul liked her best when she was in the open country, tramping with him and Jem Brent through quiet woods or having a picnic with them in the hollow of a chalk pit under overhanging trees through which the sky peeped down.

All the gipsy in her nature came out on these rare afternoons when they went on an adventure to the end of the tram-lines and then walked to some rural beauty spot beyond the world of bricks and mortar.

One of these afternoons was more than usually memorable because of the fun at the beginning of it and the tragedy at the end of it.

The fun was when Paul lay on his back in the full warmth of a golden sunshine on a bed of bracken which Loo had gathered for him—she had made a pillow for his head, and a coverlet of leaves for his body—while he watched the girl ordering Jem Brent about as they built up a fire of brushwood on which to boil a kettle for their tea.

Loo's hair had come uncoiled, as usual, and her ragged bodice was open at the neck; but she had washed her face and hands in a brook running in a hollow of the common, and she had a shining light in her eyes as she gathered broken twigs and sang little cockney songs, and jeered at Jem Brent because he wasted so many matches in lighting the fire.

Paul was thoughtful. He was thinking that the time was now at hand when after these few months of exploration in the underworld, of experience which had taught him the full meaning of misery and of self-atonement for the heritage which had come to him through the sweated labor of his father's business, he would begin the great scheme which was gradually taking form and color in his mind to prepare a way of escape for many of these children in the abyss, and to offer them some of the good gifts of life.

He would bring them, as he had brought Loo, into the open country, into the sunshine of the great sky, away from the squalor of the slums. In his vision of the future he saw a city in the fields, with gardens in the heart of it, and broad avenues lined with shady trees, and workshops within the sound of singing birds, and houses for work people built with a sense of beauty, so that those who dwelt there should be glad of their home life and forget the nightmare of Misery Mansions.

Loo, who was singing with a blithe note,

and laughing as she and James Brent puffed themselves red in the face over a fire that refused to burn, stood there as the type of all those children of poverty whose songs and laughter should rise as a happy chorus to the great Task-master when Paul had put his dream into reality.

Once she came across to him and said, "Lazy blighter!" as he lay there with his eyes closed. And presently she gave a little shriek of delight, and brought over a newly fledged bird, which she had caught in a bush overhanging the brook.

"Ain't 'e a comic little bounder?" she said, holding it tenderly against her bosom. "Reminds me of the Mouse, 'e does, when 'e stares at one with scared eyes after wakin' in the night. I'm fair tempted to take it back to Misery Mansions."

"I'm hanged if you do!" said Paul, sitting up abruptly. "It would die there before the night was out. Don't steal its liberty, Loo."

"Liberty!" said the girl. "Not 'arf! It's only humans what 'ave to stay in prison."

She restored the bird to the bush again, and then came back and sat close to Paul with her head on his shoulder.

"If only there wasn't such a blighted thing as poxy box-making!" she said. "Wouldn't you like to live always in the country, Paul, tramping the roads, not caring about nuffink—you and me as a gipsy boy and gal?"

Paul shook his head.

"I should get tired of it, without an honest job to do. Life without work is a foolish game. There's no sense in it.

"Besides, how about Bert? That young man would have something to say about it, Loo."

"'E could say what 'e blarsted well pleased," said Loo rather savagely. "Bert's nuffink to me, young feller. I've given 'im the go-by. Ain't you noticed?"

She held out her left hand, and Paul saw that she no longer wore the silver ring which he had seen on her third finger since the night when she had fought with Jake Parfitt.

He whistled with a note of surprise.

"Had a quarrel with him? That's silly

of you. You told me he was daft on you, and a very nice young man."

"Well, I've changed my mind, so there!" said Loo, blushing deeply, and looking so uncomfortable that Paul decided to find another subject of conversation.

The kettle provided it, for, by a miracle, it was boiling merrily, and James Brent, with as much gravity as though he were preparing tea in Mr. Whiteleaf's house on the other side of the river, filled a cracked teapot with a broken spout, and arranged three old cups which they had brought with them in a basket which contained some hard-boiled eggs, a loaf of bread, and two pennyworth of tea in a piece of newspaper.

Loo recovered her good temper, and with her mouth full of egg sandwich, expressed her opinion that life was a "funny ol' thing," after all, and not half bad on a fine day. On the way back across the common she sang softly to herself, lagging behind a little, and turning now and then to watch the red sun sinking behind a belt of trees.

On the tram-car which was to take them back to street life, she sat next to Paul, and let her head droop on his shoulder and fell fast asleep, until half an hour later she awakened with a start at the hooting of a motor horn, and caught hold of Paul's hand.

"'Oly Shakespeare!" she said. "I was dreamin' of that there little bird I found. I thought it 'ad turned into little Brown Mouse and was lying dead in my lap."

She shivered a little, and snuggled closer to Paul.

"Won't you shove your arm round my bloomin' waist?" she asked.

"Certainly not!" said Paul, rather startled by this request. "I'm a respectable young man, I am! Sit up, my dear, and behave yourself like a nice girl."

He was chaffing her, but to his surprise she suddenly began to cry, and wished that God would strike her dead because nobody cared the toss of a copper for her.

"Hush!" said Paul. "The conductor's looking at you. He'll think I've been hurting you."

Loo mopped her eyes and laughed with a sob in her throat.



"You always be'ave as if I was a kid!" she said.

"So you are," said Paul. "That's why I like you."

But he was rather thoughtful, and wondered whether he had been quite discreet in going about so much with a girl so passionate and impressionable as Loo Larkin. Always Bert had been in the background as a safeguard, but now that Bert's silver ring had been returned to him, there might be a little danger in continuing this comradeship.

It would be rather awkward if Loo transferred her affections to the youngest son of William Whiteleaf. The thought came into his mind in a more startling way when they had mounted the stone stairs of Trump's Buildings, and stood outside the room which Loo shared with her sister.

James Brent went into his own room with the teakettle and the remnants of the feast, and Paul held out his hand to the girl and said "so-long," according to the custom of high society in Misery Mansions.

But she suddenly clasped him about the neck and clung to him, and tried to pull his head down to her face.

"Kiss me!" she whispered hoarsely.

Her eyes were on fire, and her breath was hot in his face.

"Give us a bleeding kiss, Paul!" she said. "Jest one. Jest a little un!"

He jerked back his head and pushed her away from him.

"No! Don't get mad, Loo. Be a good girl and don't spoil our friendship."

"Friendship!" said Loo. "Can't yer see it's yer love I wants?"

"It's yours," said Paul. "But not that kind. It's the love I have for all my comrades in Misery Mansions; for all poor children of life."

"Oh, scissors!" said the girl. "What's the good o' that? Of course I was a fool. I might have known a young feller like you would give the hard eye to a girl like me."

She laid her head up against the worm-eaten door-post and cried bitterly, while Paul stood awkwardly, saying "Hush! Hush!"

But as though the sound of Loo's sobs had been heard inside the room, the door

was opened, and Emmy Gurney, the elder sister, looked out with a white face and terror-stricken eyes.

"Dear Gord!" she said, "I'm glad you're back! I'm 'alf mad with fright."

"What's the matter?" asked Paul.

He could see that the girl was trembling, and that there was a look of terror in her eyes.

"It's little Brown Mouse," she said. "'E's took bad. I think 'e's dyin'—I couldn't do without 'im!"

Paul strode into the room, stepped over a pile of cardboard boxes, and bent over the bed. Little Brown Mouse, with whom he had made fast friends, to whom he had told the story of *Hop-o'-My-Thumb*, for whom Jem had learned to play merry tunes on a penny whistle, lay very still and white, with half-closed eyes, under the heap of rags which were his coverlet.

Loo crept over to the bedside, too, forgetting her passion in this new grief.

She gave a strange cry.

"The bird! It's like my dream o' the little bird!"

She fell down on her knees, and with her arms outstretched, wept over the body of the child who seemed to have been called away by death.

"Jem," said Paul, putting his head into the room where his comrade-in-arms was laying the supper things on the deal table as punctiliously as though the lead forks and spoons were made of purest silver, "Jem, keep an eye on those poor girls. I'm going to fetch the doctor. Brown Mouse is very ill." \*

Jem dropped one of the forks, and a look of fear came into his eyes.

"Little Brown Mouse! I'll— Poor mite! Not dangerous, I hope, sir?"

"Well, it looks like ptomaine poisoning to me. But the doctor will know."

Paul ran down the steep flight of stone stairs, and was just hurrying into the courtyard when his arm was grasped by a strong hand. It was Jake Parfitt who checked him.

"I want a word with you, mate."

"Not now," said Paul. "I'm in a hurry. Tell me when I come back."

Jake still grasped him firmly by the arm, and spat on the ground before speaking again in a solemn sort of way.

"Perhaps you mightn't come back if I didn't tell you now."

Paul raised his eyebrows and answered over his shoulder as Jake followed him across the courtyard.

"Well, tell me quickly, what do you mean?"

"It's like this, mate," said Jake huskily. "Young Bert Jennings swears 'e's goin' to do you in. Says as 'ow you've stolen 'is gal from 'im, meanin' Loo Larkin."

"She gave 'im back 'is ring, an' 'e says 'e'll bash you for it. If I was you, mate, I would keep sharp eyes at dark corners. Do you take my meanin'?"

"Perfectly," said Paul. "But I can't stop to talk about it now."

"Better let me come with you, mate," said Jake, calling after him. But Paul shook his head, and went out into the streets at a great pace.

Every minute might be a question of life or death for the little Mouse. There was a poor-man's doctor three streets away. Paul prayed in his heart that the man might be in.

It was strange how the crowds in the streets seemed to get in his way, to jostle him and hinder him. Surely they might see he was hurrying for the sake of a little life.

His thoughts moved quicker than his clumping boots. Poor little Mouse! It might be best for him to peg out now, before he had to face the grim specters of hunger and toil in the place of stunted lives.

It would be a good way of escape to the land of promise. But it would be bad for his girl-mother. She would break her heart over it. It would kill all her fine pluck. No, the little one must be saved for Emmy's sake.

And Loo—she would be hard-hit, too. It was this curly-head with his brown eyes who had helped to keep her out of the way of temptation. It was for the child's sake that she kept straight when the tempter's voice called her into the crooked ways.

What was all this nonsense about Bert

Jennings? It was a nuisance, anyway, that Loo had lost her head, and perhaps her heart, in a bad moment of foolish passion.

How absurd it was! That scene outside the door had startled him. When she had tried to kiss him he had shuddered back from her.

Perhaps he had been a fool to be so kind to her, so intimate in his friendship. But all that was as nothing compared to the danger of the child. He must hurry for the boy's sake.

So his thoughts raced through his brain as he plodded through the market, elbowing his way through the stifling crowds, and then paced down a narrow, dark street at the end of which he saw the doctor's red lamp as a beacon of hope for all those who were sick.

But suddenly a man stepped in front of him, deliberately, with a threatening gesture.

"'Alf a minute, my lad. I want a word with you."

"I can't stop," said Paul. "Sorry, but I'm going to fetch the doctor."

"You've got to stop," said the man. "I'm Bert Jennings, and I'm going to smash you for playing about with my gal. See?"

Paul was close to a lamp-post, and by the flickering light of it he saw a tall, good-looking young fellow with a white face and burning eyes. He wore a peaked cap low down on his forehead, and there was a short club tucked under his arm.

"Keep cool, my lad," said Paul. "I haven't been playing about with your girl. But in any case, I can't argue with you now, Emmy's boy has been taken ill. I'm off to fetch the doctor."

"You'll want a doctor for yourself," said Bert Jennings. "Take that, you darned, mealy mouthed son of a tyke!"

He raised his club, and with a sudden, savage swing, brought it down with a heavy blow. It struck Paul across the temple, and he fell on to the pavement as though he had been shot, with blood streaming from an ugly gash.

"That 'll teach you to leave my girl alone," said Bert Jennings; but though he spoke the words alone, the savage note in



them died away into a whisper as he saw how still and quiet the young man lay.

"Strike me!" he said, with a terror-stricken look up and down the street. "I didn't mean to lie 'im out. I 'it 'im a bit too 'ard."

For a moment he hesitated, and stooped over the prostrate body, breathing jerkily. Then he took to his heels and ran, like a hunted animal, into the mouth of a dark alley.

The patter of his footsteps echoed out of the darkness, and then were lost in silence.

Paul must have lain for twenty minutes before he regained his consciousness. Then he sat up, moaning a little, and wiped the blood out of his eyes.

For a little while he could not remember why he was out in the street, what had happened, on what mission he had come before he was stunned by a blow across the head. Then it all flashed into his brain, and he rose to his feet, leaning for support against the lamp-post.

"Good Heavens—little Brown Mouse!"

He staggered up the street, which at this hour of the night was all silent and deserted. It seemed an hour before he had reached that red light burning as a beacon at the far end of the roadway. Then he rang the bell of the doctor's door violently, so that he heard its loud jangle in the hall.

He was shown into the surgery by a drab of a servant, who gave a glance at his wounded head, and asked a suspicious question.

"You ain't drunk, I suppose?"

"No," said Paul. "I'm in a hurry, that's all. Tell the doctor to be quick."

But the doctor seemed an age before he came. He was a young man with tired eyes and a quiet manner.

"Been fighting?" he asked.

He seemed surprised when Paul paid no heed to his own wound, but implored the doctor to hurry to Trump's Buildings, where a small boy lay seriously ill.

"I've lost a lot of precious time—by an accident. I shall be immensely obliged if you will come at once, doctor."

The young medical man was listening rather curiously to Paul's words, and star-

ing at his rough clothes and at his pale face with a nasty gash across the forehead.

"You're a gentleman, aren't you?" he asked.

"Yes, at least, I was once. But that doesn't make any difference, does it? Won't you be quick, sir?"

"Rather queer place to live—Trump's Buildings," said the doctor, putting his stethoscope into a black bag. "Better known as Misery Mansions, aren't they? Come on, then."

He was really quick, in his quiet way, though Paul was inwardly raging with impatience at his unnecessary questions and deliberate movements. Shoulder to shoulder they strode down the street together, and the doctor asked one or two more questions, with a side glance at the young man by his side.

"What kind of accident was it that damaged your head like that?"

"The kind of accident that happens on this side of the river," said Paul. "Do you think you can walk a little faster, sir?"

The doctor did not quicken his pace. He was striding along pretty fast.

"Doing a bit of slumming for the fun of the thing?" he asked.

"Yes," said Paul. "There's heaps of fun in it, isn't there?"

The irony of his voice did not escape the doctor's ears.

"Plenty of human nature, anyhow," he said.

So at last they came to Trump's Buildings, and the doctor was not far behind Paul when they reached the fifth floor.

"Any further?" he asked.

"That door," said Paul.

The door was opened by Loo Larkin.

"I thought you'd lost yerself!" she said in a whisper. "You're just in time."

But when the doctor had gone to the bedside and had stooped for a moment over the small boy, he raised his head and spoke as though in answer to her words.

"I'm just too late. He is dead."

"Dead!"

The word was cried out by Emmy, the girl-mother, and at the tragic sound of it Paul's blood ran cold. It was the cry of a broken heart.

Jem Brent was in the room, and as the girl-mother fell forward over the little cold corpse of the child who had been his comrade, the tears streamed into his eyes, and he put his hands up to his face.

But Loo Larkin had no tears in her eyes. She turned savagely to Paul, and in the death chamber her voice was shrill and awful.

"Why did you stay so long? It's your fault the little Mouse 'as gone. The doctor could 'ave saved 'im if he'd come before."

Paul was stricken into silence. The girl's words cut into his heart like sharp knives.

Perhaps she was right. Perhaps if Bert Jennings had not stood in the way and struck that blow the Mouse might have lived. But how could he tell her now? Silence was best.

"I'm sorry!" he said. "Poor wee Mouse!"

When the doctor had gone he and Jem stole out of the room and left the sisters to their grief. But even with their door shut the two men could hear the wailing of the women over the body of the poor Brown Mouse.

"God knows best," said Paul. "But it's hard on those two girls."

"It's better for the Mouse," said Jem very quietly.

Paul looked across the table to his comrade, who had picked up the penny whistle, and was playing a queer little ghost tune, which was like the music of tears.

"You're right, old man. The Mouse has escaped from the cage."

After that they were silent, but each of them pondered over the mystery of life, and the meaning of death, and the tragedy that had given a new significance to the name of Misery Mansions.

But the end of the tragedy had not yet come. It was on the next night that Paul met Loo Larkin in the courtyard. She had put on the hat with a green feather which she wore on Sundays, and at her breast was a piece of sham jewelry which gave her a kind of squalid gaudiness. She tried to avoid him, but he stood in front of her, possessed by a horrible suspicion.

"Loo, my girl, where are you going?"

She raised her eyes to his face, defiantly. They were red with weeping, but she had dusted them with flour.

"I'm going to earn the money for the Mouse's funeral."

"To earn it? How, in God's name?"

She laughed, with a horrible mirthlessness.

"In the easiest way. By takin' a penny bus to the devil's playground. It's for the Mouse's funeral."

Paul gripped the girl by the wrist and dragged her back into the courtyard as she tried to pass him. His voice rang out under a brick archway.

"Do you think little Brown Mouse will be happy when he knows how you've paid for his funeral? Do you think the flowers on his coffin will smell sweet when they have been plucked in the garden of shame?"

"Loo, come back! Come back before you have made the little Mouse weep for you, as his body is carried to the grave."

"I'll sell my soul so that 'e won't 'ave a pauper's funeral," said Loo. "Leave go of my 'and, carn't yer? What's the good of talking? You ain't a goin' ter pay for 'is funeral, are yer?"

"Yes," said Paul. "If Emmy will let me."

"You?"

"Yes. And the little Brown Mouse shall have the finest funeral that ever came out of Misery Mansions—if you'll promise to be good, Loo."

She stared at him as though he were raving at her.

"Where's the tin to come from—out of your fourteen bob a week?"

"He shall ride in a glass coach," said Paul, "with four black horses—if you'll come back home."

"Four, did you say? 'Ere, you're balmy!"

"And he shall have a wreath for every year of his life, Loo. That will make six white wreaths of lilies-of-the-valley and the finest flowers to be bought—if you'll promise to be good."

"Six wreaths!" said Loo in a whisper. "You ain't gone daft, 'ave you?"

"And you and Emmy shall ride in one



black carriage, and Jem and me in another, and Jake and his wife in a third. We'll have six carriages, Loo, for all your friends—if you'll promise to go straight."

She spoke hoarsely to him.

"Who's goin' ter pay?"

"I am, every penny of it."

"Swear it. Honor bright?"

"Word of honor, Loo."

There was something in his eyes, some tone of his voice, which convinced her of his sincerity, though he seemed to speak of miracles.

"Who are yer?" she asked. "There's always been a bloomin' mystery about you. It was you who gave the money to Simon Garth. It was you who got Jake 'is job again. And I've 'eard Jem call you 'sir,' as though you were a gory dook.

"Who are yer? I'd like ter know.

"'Ow do I know you're tellin' me the truth about the four 'orses for the 'earse, and the six wreaths, and the kerridges?"

"I'll tell you the truth, if you promise to come back home, and stand by Emmy as an honest girl. Will you promise?"

She nodded her head, and stared at him with big, brown, wondering eyes.

"I am Paul Whiteleaf, the youngest son of William Whiteleaf, the master of all these factories here.

"I have come from the other side of the river to pay back his debts. One of my first payments shall be to the little Brown Mouse."

The girl gasped and shrank away from him, just as Lizzie Legg had done.

"A son of William Whiteleaf! No! Strike me dead!"

But she suffered him to take her hand again, and to lead her up the flights of stone stairs to the room where Emmy was sobbing because Loo had vowed to go to

the bad so that she might pay for a coffin with brass handles.

Two days later the little Brown Mouse left his cage forever, and Paul kept his promise, so that never before had such a funeral gone from Misery Mansions.

The carriage was drawn by four black horses, and the coffin of polished oak with brass handles was covered with six white wreaths, and six carriages followed at a walking pace between all the inhabitants of Trump's Buildings who bared their heads as the body of the child went by.

And because of that strange sentiment which is in the hearts of the poor, some of the wild grief of the girl-mother was assuaged by the splendor of the funeral, and there was a shining light in Loo's eyes in spite of the tears that filled them.

By the graveside Paul whispered to her:

"I've kept my promise, Loo. Are you going to keep yours? Will you promise again, here, by this open grave?"

She bent her head, and Paul heard the word he wanted to hear, as the clergyman, with his white surplice blowing in the wind, spoke his prayer over the dust of the dead child, and said Amen, not guessing that it was to the whisper of a woman who had pledged her soul to be good, over the coffin of little Brown Mouse.

Before many weeks had passed there were other little coffins, not so grand, and not carried behind four horses, on the way to the graveyard, because of a great lock-out in the Whiteleaf works and an industrial conflict in which the children were the first victims.

Paul Whiteleaf was in the ranks of the labor army, and it was on behalf of his fellow workers that he raised the flag of revolt against his own kith and kin, who denied these people a living wage.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK. Don't forget this magazine is issued weekly, and that you will get the continuation of this story without waiting a month.

A REMARKABLE  
PSYCHOLOGICAL  
STUDY THAT  
ENTHRALLS

## THE LIVING PORTRAIT

BY TOD ROBBINS

Author of "The Terrible Three," "Who Wants a Green Bottle?" etc.

IN NEXT WEEK'S ALL-STORY WEEKLY

A STORY POE  
WOULD HAVE  
BEEN PROUD  
TO WRITE

# Five Minutes to Seven



By Miles Overholt

**W**HAT they mean when there are three persons mixed up in one of those pussy-wants-a-corner affairs is the Eternal Try Angle.

Because you will always find a woman somewhere in one of the corners angling for a man. Only it looks more dignified spelled the other way.

There are several million Betty Babbitts in the world, all of them being in the fishing business and catching—oh, suckers, and clams, and lobsters, and whales, and the like.

Betty Babbitt lived in Gilpin, which was famous for nothing ever happening. Gilpin could have supplied the entire world with ennui and never would have missed it.

Wilbur Wiggins lived there from force of habit. He was Betty's small-town beau for the same reason. Some day he was going to marry her—as soon as one of his numerous inventions made him rich—or something.

For Wilbur was the inventing kid.

Didn't his patent one-handed collar button prove one of the best sellers on the market? Of course, Jason Stronghold, his boss, had taken over the button and had it patented and annexed the honor and the royalties, but that was because Wilbur didn't have the capital to put it on the market and exploit it.

It wasn't a collar button that would automatically roll out from under the dresser when it fell there, or climb out of the shirt

when you whistled to it, or unbutton itself, or anything, but it was a handy little thing, and one-armed men welcomed it with great joy. It was what you could call a boon, if you asked the advertisement writer about it.

And then that new drink Wilbur concocted! Why, the traveling men went plumb crazy over that elixir, and one of them carried away the recipe, and some bartender in Skamokawa became famous overnight for inventing the lie that he had invented the drink.

Then there was the pants presser that Wilbur turned over to Mr. Stronghold. Being in the clothing business, Mr. Stronghold could appreciate its value, and he did. As a business increases—but that is beside the question.

Mr. Stronghold was pretty nearly able to retire from active life because of Wilbur's inventions, and all Wilbur ever got out of them was twenty-two dollars as clerk in the Temple of Economy, which name for his store was Mr. Stronghold's own invention. Or, at least, he said it was.

And so Wilbur was going to marry Betty one of these days. It was practically settled. It would have been an absolute certainty had it not been that one day Bertram Grassby came tearing over the horizon.

Gilpin had a horizon just as well as other places.

Bertram Grassby motored down from the big town to visit a maiden aunt. Gilpin



was a fine town for maiden aunts. You could travel for a whole day and you couldn't find a town that would fit a maiden aunt better across the shoulders than the town of Gilpin.

And while he was visiting his maiden aunt, Bertram met a maiden without the aunt-attachment. Her name was Betty Babbitt.

And right away he decided that what was the use of him wearing glasses any more? His eyes were cured. Why, he could look at her for hours at a time and it didn't hurt his vision a bit.

Which completes the triangle and prepares us for the worst.

Because Betty couldn't make up her mind which one to become addicted to. She really couldn't.

Of course, in a way, she had kind of promised herself to Wilbur, but, then, what does an angler care for promises? Betty, you see, was a promising young lady.

And then when Bertram came tripping into the pasture and began admitting a lot of exploits he had single-handed and unaided accomplished without a single loss of life, why things began to take on a different hue.

You know—they began to look like what you read in those books that get all wept over out among the hammock. Sure—you know: The kind written by women who could have been married a dozen times, if they'd have wanted to.

Wilbur met Bertram one day over at the Babbitt house. And it didn't take Bertram more than an hour to show Wilbur up. It certainly was a deadly parallel, and you could see with one eye tied behind you that Bertram had the makin's for a first-class husband to a Betty Babbitt.

But, you see, Betty had kind of promised herself to Wilbur, and—yeh, she liked Wilbur. He was a good scout, Wilbur was.

He wasn't exactly the fellow Mr. Kupenschlosser would have picked out to wear his clothes all over the back pages of the magazines, but he would pass in a town like Gilpin. And when Wilbur wanted to know what was Betty going to do about it, why, she didn't hardly know what.

So far as Betty could remember, the

heroine in one of those flivver books didn't say, either, right on the jump that way. She sort of pondered over it, as Betty remembered it, but she would have to look it up.

Meantime, she told Wilbur that, yeh, she had kind of promised him, but something had come into her life—something—well, you know for a young girl to decide between a coupla young men, both good fellas, an' everything—why, it wasn't a question that you could decide in a minute, and she'd have to have time to think it out. She was only a young girl, and life's problems were weighing her down already.

What Betty wanted to do was to mingle among the pages of one of those triangular books she'd been browsing on whenever she could get out of helping to do the housework. She would look 'em over, and when she found a heroine that she particularly liked, she was going to follow her example—no matter what the cost.

Which wasn't very encouraging for Wilbur, since he thought it already had been decided. But, on the other hand, it wasn't exactly a cinch for Bertram, either.

It was along about fifty-fifty, if you wanted to put it in round figgers, and when you start picking husbands out of a book, why, it's a wild guess, anyway—any way you figure it. Isn't that so?

So Betty consulted "The Great Love of Flossie DeVere," and "The Broken Heart," and "Love That Never Dies," and the like, and when she returned to consciousness she sat up and wondered "Where am I?" till her mother had to go and wash the dishes herself. That's how deadly the fumes from those three books, all in one day, were.

But when she got her thoughts all sorted out and placed in little piles so she could look 'em over and tabulate 'em, and eliminate the ones she couldn't use—when she got a definite hold on the situation that way, why it was easy.

So she sent for Wilbur. She didn't need to worry about Bertram. He was already there. That was a fine thing about Bertram—he was right where she could put her hand on him at all times.

And after they had lemonaded and said it was a nice evening and hadn't it been a

hot day, and had passed on other such highly important topics, why, Betty said she wanted to talk to them seriously.

"I hope you put your words all in one syllable, then," said Bertram, "because there's a certain party present who can't understand anything serious."

"Oh, never mind me!" grinned Wilbur. "I'm quick that way. If I only understand a word now and then, I'll piece it together some way."

So with these preliminary remarks they were off.

"I'm going to marry one of you boys. What time is it?" said Betty.

"Ten minutes to seven," said Wilbur, looking at Bertram's watch before Grassby could get the words out.

"I am going to marry one of you boys," Betty repeated soberly, "at ten minutes to seven, one year from to-night!"

"Gosh, this is sudden!" ejaculated Wilbur. "But I'm a plumb frost as a spectator at a wedding."

"The one who comes to me one year from to-night—at ten minutes to seven—the most successful in business, can have me," Betty went on.

"What business?" Bertram wanted to know.

"Any one of a dozen," replied Betty. "Phonograph, cash register, motion-pictures, sewing machines, automobiles—anything—any modern line of business."

"It all looks alike to me," said Wilbur. "The other guy always gets the money, anyway."

"I think—yes, we will make it automobiles," said Betty, after a moment's thought, settling a couple of life-businesses just like that. "The idea is that both of you must start without capital—as chauffeurs, oilers, agents, repairmen, salesmen, anything, just so it is in connection somehow with automobiles. Do I make myself plain?"

"You couldn't make yourself plain with an ax," said Wilbur.

But she knew what he meant.

"Suits me," said Bertram. "When do we start?"

"The sooner the better," replied Betty. "Why not to-morrow?"

And it was so agreed. There wasn't anything else to do. Betty was running the show.

## II.

"THE trouble with me," said Wilbur to himself as he crawled into the hay that night, "is that I don't know the carburetor of an auto from the upkeep."

And as Bertram drove his car homeward he mused:

"What a cinch! The old man will be pleased to know that his one and only son desires to start at the bottom and learn the automobile business in the garage which he had recently bought for said son's own business.

"I wonder if Betty suspected that. But, of course, she couldn't know."

You see we are letting you in on the secret this way, leaving nothing to the imagination, so you will not have to turn to the last page for the climax. Don't you love that?

But where do we go from here?

Wilbur Wiggins tendered his resignation to Mr. Stronghold the next morning, and left for the big town the same evening without seeing Betty. It took him two hours to land a job as car washer and cleaner in the White Garage. His wages were three dollars a day.

"Father," said Bertram Grassby next morning to the man who paid his bills, "I have decided that I have been an idler long enough."

"Is—that—so?" grunted the old man. "Where do you get that kind of a drink? Never heard of it before."

"I haven't been drinking, and I mean it," said Bertram, just like they do in the movies. "I want to learn the automobile business—to begin at the bottom."

With that the father arose with the intention of forcibly restraining Bertram as soon as he began to grow violent.

"Begin all over and say it slow and tremulous," said he. "I guess my age and hard living have got me at last. Did you say it, or am I hearing those unusual sounds?"

"It is no joking matter," said Bertram. "I mean just what I say. I want to go to



work in the garage as an oiler and cleaner, or anything, so I can learn the automobile business. I want to grow up with it until I am capable of handling it alone."

"My son," said Grassby, Sr., placing one hand on his son's shoulder and the other one on his pistol pocket, just in case—"my son," he said, "this is the proudest moment of my life—if you are in your right mind."

"When can I start?" Bertram wanted to know.

"None too soon to suit me," said the old man. "Hurry up before you get out of the notion."

And that is the way Bertie Grassby became a hired man in his own establishment.

The strange part of this whole Grassby episode is the fact that Bertram really worked. It was a terrible thing, of course, but it was the first time any one ever had offered him an object to shoot at, and Bertram wanted Betty.

But, being the son of the man who was putting up the financial alibi for his job, Bertie advanced very rapidly. One of the reasons was that the foreman didn't want him around.

So within a month the new man was placed in the sales department. The agency for a couple of new cars had been taken over by the elder Grassby, and it was Bertram's business to sell 'em.

And he sold those flivverinos, too, occasionally. Bertie had a good appearance, and he already had the natural salesman's oily tongue and smooth manners, both of which had been wished on him by a family that prided itself on its greasy denomination that way.

So he could sell cars. And then from there he stepped right into the middle of a man's-size job—that of boss of the sales' department.

Betty had made it a kind of a rule that neither of the contestants was to call upon her during the exciting contest.

And, what do you know! The nasty things went and took her word for it. Wasn't that just too silly for anything!

But there wasn't anything in the plans and specifications or by-laws to prevent

Betty from calling on them. So she went up to the big town after three months had staggered by, and—yes, she knew where they were working. The addresses were in their monthly reports.

Maybe those monthly reports sort of influenced her a bit, you can't tell. Betty could see that Wilbur wasn't going to amount to much, and that Bertram was.

Why, Bertram already was in the sales department, having worked his way up there by sheer force of ability, or personality, or something, and Wilbur was just where he started. Well, Wilbur wasn't slipping back any. You have to give him credit.

So Betty lingered with Bertram a couple of hours over at the Yumm Yumm ice-cream parlor, near his garage—and said, "Howdy" to Wilbur and hurried away. He was all greased up and looked like a hired man. Bertram could have passed anywhere as the fellow who gets the girl in the last act.

So it will be seen that Betty wasn't at all grieved when she saw who was taking all the candy. You can't beat Bertha M. Shay for giving you the proper matrimonial hunches. The wonder is that the *débutante* class doesn't adopt her classics as text books.

### III.

A LITTLE flaxen-haired girl ran on ahead of her mother—an automobile dashed out of the White Garage—Wilbur leaped for the child and pulled her from under the fender just as the mother fainted with fright.

From the drug store, where she was revived, she telephoned her husband. He came after her in a taxi. Wilbur went back to work speculating.

"What every garage ought to have is a warning-signal that starts to ring whenever a car approaches the door," he told the foreman. "That's the third near-accident I've seen in front of this joint since I've been working here."

"Well, if I was you," said the foreman, "I would go and invent a nice little light-house, or bell-buoy, or somethin', and sell it to this here garage."

"Which sage advice I will proceed forthwith to follow," replied Wilbur.

And one night later, when the husband of the woman who had fainted in front of the garage had come and literally forced Wilbur to accompany him out to his house to dinner and get thanked for saving his daughter—why, that evening Wilbur told his host that he was going to invent some sort of a signal to prevent the running down of pedestrians in front of public garages, and his host said he hoped he would.

"But," said Mr. Walters, "your troubles will just then commence. You can invent something, but you can't compel the garages to install them."

"Why, that would be a public benefaction," said Wilbur. "Why shouldn't they install them? The city should force them to."

"The expense, mainly," said Walters, "and the fact that every one of them will resent what they will probably call the beginning of the city's butting into their affairs. It will also mean that all private garages opening on a street will be forced to install them."

"Just the same, I am going ahead," insisted Wilbur.

And right after that Wilbur went and forgot all about his invention, the dinner, saving children, his job, Betty, everything.

Ah, you may well ask why? You may ask and you shall be told.

For there came into Wilbur's line of vision a girl. One of those girls that you see on the covers of magazines and candy boxes and in dreams exclusively.

Her name was Capitola Dalbert, and she was Mrs. Walters's sister. Also, she was staying at the Walters home while her mother was visiting in the East.

Yes, sir, Wilbur went right into a decline, and whatever happened that evening was not of record on his mind. There wasn't a bit of room in Wilbur's head that night but girl—just plumb chock full of *her*.

He vaguely remembered hearing Mrs. Walters say, just before he left, that as soon as he had perfected his signal she and her husband would see if her father, Frederick Dalbert, member of the city

council, wouldn't use his influence to have an ordinance passed compelling garages to install a device like that.

But that was not the reason he went back again and again to confer with the Walters family about his patent warning-signal, and about which no mention was made after he reached there. If somebody had got a patent on Miss Dalbert, he could have made a wonderful deal with Wilbur along about then.

But just the same the signal was completed.

But when Mr. Walters, through his father-in-law, presented the proposition to the council there was a violent and intensive protest. Every public garage owner and dealer in the city couldn't be happy over it at all. They just rode over that councilmanic body with all cylinders chugging.

And at the very first hearing, Bertram Grassby and his father stepped right up and said it wasn't right. And when Bertram saw Wilbur there and learned that he was the inventor, why, his wrath knew no bounds—if you know what I mean.

Bertram, in fact, said right out loud that Wilbur was an upstart and a nobody and a butter-in and a lot of other choice automobilious remarks which he had picked up here and there, and old King Pandemonium took up the reins and started to reign.

Which called for something or other, so the council passed the buck along to the second reading. Councilmen are quick to think that way.

This guy, Second Reading, seems to have his share of trouble, but he bears up well.

Wilbur had two callers the next day. The first one said he was a representative of the local automobile association. His name, if anybody wants to know, was Arthur Brandt.

Said Brandt:

"I realize, Mr. Higgins—"

"Wiggins," prompted Wilbur.

"Wiggins," repeated Brandt. "I realize, Mr. Kiggins, that you have put in some time and trouble on this invention of yours, and it might be that the association would want to use such a thing some time—"



"Fine!" said Wilbur. "I thought you would see it that way."

"And so," went on Mr. Brandt, "I have come to make you an offer for your signal—just in case we ever decide we might want to install it, though the idea is very, very remote. The council will turn down the proposed ordinance, Mr. Scriggins."

"Then you think you probably would not want to use it?"

"Frankly, I think we would not, Mr. Giggins," replied Brandt. "However, we are willing to take it off your hands at, say, one thousand dollars. That will pay you for your time—"

"Nope," said Wilbur, waking up for the first time since his folks used to have to call him nine times. "I don't believe I want to sell if you don't intend to have it installed in the public garages. You see, Mr. Brandt, my idea was to protect the pedestrians and not to make money."

"What?" ejaculated Mr. Brandt.

"I don't like to be unreasonable that way," said Wilbur, "but I'm kind of set about this, somehow, so I guess I'll have to say good-by and call it no sale!"

The other visitor was Jake Meyerfield. And Jake opened the pot with these well-chosen words:

"If you need any coin to put that there signal thing of yours across—you know me, Wig."

"Now, that's mighty kind of you," replied Wilbur, wondering the while if mebbe it was a dream, or something. He had not been born with money, he had not required money, but now it looked like he was about to have money thrust upon him. But he wanted to know:

"Who did you want me to kill?"

"Oh, I ain't askin' any return favors!" quickly smiled Jake. "I'm a business man, Wig, and you've got somethin' that's going to get the coin. They may fight ag'in' it, but it's goin' to go over. Watch it!"

"Still, I don't see just why you think I need money."

"Why, to put it across, son, to put 'er across. Them councilmen have to feed one or two-families apiece, Wig, and they can buy Liberty Bonds and Thrift Stamps, and I don't know what-all with money."

"Oh!" said Wilbur. By which it will be seen that our little hero could finally think things out without hardly any rehearsing.

"Here's my card," said Mr. Meyerfield. "You can't ever tell. Better come up and see me!"

And then Jake went away from there, while Wilbur changed his clothes and hurried out to see the Walters family. Yes, Wilbur went to visit the Walters—only he didn't. He was looking for Capitola Dalbert, and he didn't fool any of them with that Walters camouflage.

Not even Capitola. What do you suppose she was all dressed up for!

To Capitola, Wilbur explained all the horrible details of his experience with certain persons who suddenly had become interested in him and his signal of warning. And Capitola alleged it was a shame they didn't throw those automobile garages out of the city hall, and maybe the ordinance would pass, anyway.

And so they got along first rate, if you stop to figger that Wilbur forgot to go home till the cars stopped running.

#### IV.

BETTY BABBITT came to town a couple of months later. She spent nearly a half-hour with Wilbur, who was still rubbing down tired automobiles and massaging flivverettes. Wilbur hadn't accomplished much, so he didn't tell Betty about his warning-signal.

But when she went over to see Bertram she learned all about it. Bertram insisted that Wilbur was a no-good guy, and was doing that inventing thing and trying to get an ordinance passed just for the purpose of heckling him. He said Wilbur was jealous and envious and vicious and would do anything to make it difficult for him to win Betty.

The which pleased Betty a lot. Why, it was just like the novel—pretty nearly. Here these young gladiators, or whatever you'd call 'em, were staging a battle for the hand of a maiden fair that was disrupting darn near a whole town.

It certainly was great, if you asked her. And because Bertram put it up to her in

that light, why, Betty wasn't so sure, after all, that she didn't want Wilbur to win. Anyway, she decided to remain neutral for the present.

And so they plugged along for about three months more, and the ordinance to compel public garages to install warning-signals of some kind went into the second reading, and there were protestants aplenty. But over the protests the council members passed it along to the third and last reading.

There was nothing exciting about it, but the old-time lobbyists, including Jake Meyerfield, said it looked kind of fatal. It appeared to them, they said, like as if those councilmen were going to let the darn thing die.

Wilbur spent so many of the following evenings in the vicinity of Capitola Dalbert that he sometimes wondered who Betty Babbitt was, anyway. She was a fine entertainer, was Capitola. One evening she inquired politely:

"Why did you leave Gilpin?"

"To see if I couldn't beat—to come up here," he finished.

Can't girls ask the blamest fool questions? Just when everything was running along all right, and the subject was in smooth and interesting channels, Capitola had to suddenly step on the wrong conversational lever and throw the whole shooting-match out of gear.

"To beat what?" she wanted to know.

"To beat a fellow in the automobile business," answered Wilbur. You couldn't dodge Capitola's questioning once she got started.

"Why?" she asked.

"Why—because Betty—because somebody made it an object—because—well, there wasn't anything else left to do."

Now, there wasn't any sense to that, and well did Capitola know it. So when Wilbur street-carred himself home that night, Capitola had all the facts, figures, and conditions of Betty's little contest, and that was the night she decided to show that fresh country kid who was umpiring the game.

Nearly twelve months had passed since Wilbur and Bertram had left Gilpin for the purpose of wresting a fortune from the automobile business.

Bertram now was manager and owner of the garage and business. It had been officially taken over by him at the end of nine months, it being Bertram's birthday, or something, but in his report to Betty, Bertie showed conclusively that it was because of his wonderful salesmanship and general first-class management that did it. Betty was mighty proud of him.

Wilbur's monthly report read like a parrot discussing the cracker industry. It said:

Still washing cars; same salary.

Following their nine months' report, Betty sent each of them a cryptic message. It read:

Three months from to-night, at ten minutes to seven, your year will be up.

Which excited Bertram to still greater efforts, but didn't seem to feeze Wilbur much, except that he sighed heavily and stuffed the message in his pocket.

It was two months and three and one-half weeks after that before the warning-signal ordinance came up for final disposition. Wilbur's boss wouldn't let him off to attend the meeting, but it wouldn't have made any difference as to the outcome, anyway. He figured he couldn't help matters by lending his presence, so he didn't care.

But somebody else did.

For while the automobile delegation was busily presenting its side of the case, the councilmen listening gravely, just like they knew what it was all about—why, just at this critical juncture, when the flivverites had begun to attack those lawmakers, in trooped an army of women and children.

It was the most imposing array of skirts that ever had invaded the city hall, and a fair young woman at the head of the band asked if please could they be heard.

Being women, they could. You bet your life they could!

Then there was brought forth a crippled child—a little girl who had been run down by an automobile coming out of the Grassby garage several months previous. Grassby, however, had successfully dodged a suit for damages.

Another one was exhibited—a little boy



—hurt while passing in front of the Excelsior garage on Grand Avenue. Two more children who had been injured by autos in the same manner were shown to the councilmen, and then Mrs. Walters made a little speech, and her child was exhibited just for effect. She told how her little girl was rescued just as the wheels were about to pass over its body, and made a strong plea for the passage of the ordinance.

And in about seven and a half minutes that measure was unanimously passed, and Capitola Dalbert—for it was indeed our she-ro who had gathered up all those women and crippled children—went over to her dad and kissed him right there in front of folks.

Then she whispered to him for about five consecutive minutes, and delayed a lot of lawmaking, and when she went out of the hall she was blushing like she had been caught looking at somebody's busy clothesline.

Councilman Dalbert, in turn, whispered to the president of the council, and that was all the whispering.

Jake Meyerfield elbowed people to the right and then to the left, and made his way out of there. Jake was a business man.

Ten minutes later Mr. Meyerfield was standing in front of Wilbur with his check-book in his hand.

"I don't think they're gonna pass that ordinance," said Jake. "But I'm willin' to take a chance on a guy like you. Of course you need money; all young fellers do. Here, I'll give you, say, five thousand dollars for your signal, and then if they don't install 'em—"

There was nobody else in the shop, and Wilbur had to answer the phone.

"This is Brandt," said a voice. "Is this Wilbert Diggins?"

"Shoot!" said Wilbur.

"They've passed that ordinance," said Brandt. "I'll raise that bid of mine to ten thousand dollars on my own hook.

"Is it a go? Will you take that for your signal? Of course there'll be a dozen others on the market—"

"Good-by!" said Wilbur.

To Jake he said:

"They passed the ordinance, Mr. Meyerfield. I guess I don't want to sell."

And though Jake raised the ante to ten thousand dollars for a half-interest, Wilbur obstinately refused. Oh, he was a mean-dispositioned cuss, Wilbur was.

## V.

WHEN the owner of the garage heard that it was one of his own men who had invented that warning contraption, and had been instrumental in having the ordinance passed—when Mr. Warmfield heard that the same evening he returned from an extended visit in the East, why, he rushed right down to his place of business and sorted Wilbur out from the rest of the grease and engaged him in conversation.

"Who in hell are you, anyway?" he wanted to know.

"Oh, I'm one of your best men," said Wilbur. "I can tell right off which is the radiator and which is the gas tank—if it isn't a strange car."

"Show me that machine of yours," demanded Warmfield.

And after he had dissected it and hummed a little tune for a few minutes he said: "Come into the office."

"I gotta finish this car," said Wilbur. "You'll have to wait a few minutes, Mr. Warmfield. This man is in a hurry!"

And instead of ordering some one else to do the job, why, the big boss waited. When Wilbur entered the office a half-hour later, washed and all ready for company, Warmfield inquired:

"How many offers to buy your signal have you had?"

"Only two," replied Wilbur.

"Why didn't you take 'em—or did you?"

"They were too darn sudden!" smiled the car-tender. "Those fellows acted like they wanted it too badly, or something. Besides, I've got two days yet."

"What do you mean—two days?"

"I don't want to sell till five minutes to seven, day after to-morrow evening," answered Wilbur.

"Well, you're an inventor, all right," said his boss. "All of you are mute."

"That being settled, I suppose I can go home now," Wilbur wondered.

"Not by a damn sight!" replied the big boss person. "I want an interest in that machine of yours. Nobody will invent anything to equal it. How much?"

"Twenty-five thousand dollars for a one-half interest," said Wilbur, absolutely certain the shock would kill Mr. Warmfield.

"No; you're not a nut, after all!" was the way it affected him. "You're a darn good business man. But I guess I'll take it. What's your name?"

And he started to write a check.

"I can't close the deal before five minutes to seven day after to-morrow evening," firmly declared Wilbur, backing away.

"Why not? Want to try to get more?"

"No—I'm funny that way," said Wilbur. "I'll take the check, all right—day after to-morrow. But I'm powerful set on the time."

"This device will be in every garage in the United States within a year," said Warmfield, after Wilbur had signed an agreement to sell two days later.

Wilbur went out to the Walters home that night, but Capitola, he was informed, had gone out of town for the week-end. But it was a joyful little party at that.

There was a regular jollification session, and Councilman Dalbert dropped in for a moment on the way to his club where he was stopping for the summer. He congratulated the inventor, and said:

"You know that ordinance hasn't been signed yet. I don't know what the idea is, but Capitola insisted that I use my influence to keep the mayor's signature off it till five minutes to seven day after to-morrow evening."

So when Wilbur went home an hour later his feet didn't touch the sidewalk for nearly seven blocks. Then he happened to think they were still running street-cars, and he boarded one.

## VI.

BERTRAM GRASSBY motored down to Gilpin with a perfectly interesting report on his past year's experiences which he planned to lay alongside Wilbur's measly little alibi. He wasn't afraid of Wilbur's invention, even though the ordinance had been passed.

He was fairly jubilant when he drove over to the Babbitt home at six-thirty on the evening of the last day. Betty's mother came to the door. She had an envelope in her hand. It was addressed to Bertram and Wilbur. The note which it enclosed said briefly:

DEAR BOYS:

I never knew what love was till now. Charlie Hance and I were married yesterday. Good-by; we are off on our honeymoon. Charlie doesn't know anything about business. But he writes the most wonderful motion-picture scenario love triangles, and everything.

BETTY.

When Capitola returned to the Walters home Wilbur was sitting on the front doorstep.

"I've got a paper here in my right hand with your name on it, sweetheart," he said by way of greeting. "There is a preacher waiting two blocks down the street. How about it?"

"What time is it?" Capitola irrelevantly inquired.

"Ten minutes after seven," replied Wilbur.

"Wait till I throw this valise in the house, honey!" said Capitola.



# LOVE

BY GEORGIA M. MCNALLY

WAS it the flame of the moon's gold lamp

That glowed in your hair and eye?

Was it the sobbing violin

That breathed a passionate sigh?

Was it the red rose that crimsoned your throat,

And sprinkled your lips with dew?

Or was it the birth of a wonderful love

That was born in my heart for you?



# From Now On

by Frank L. Packard

Author of "The Sin That Was His," "The Miracle Man," "The Iron-Rider," etc.

## BOOK IV—Continued

### CHAPTER V.

#### THE ROOM ON THE THIRD FLOOR.

IT was pitch black. Dave Henderson opened his eyes drowsily. He lay for a moment puzzled and bewildered as to where he was. And then consciousness returned in fuller measure, and he remembered that he had thrown himself down on the bed fully dressed—and must have fallen asleep.

He stirred now uneasily. He was most uncomfortable. Something brutally hard and unyielding seemed to be prodding and boring into his side. He felt down under him with his hand—and smiled quizzically. It was his revolver. He would probably, otherwise, have slept straight through the night. The revolver, as he had turned over in his sleep undoubtedly, had twisted in his pocket, and had resolved itself into a sort of skewer, muzzle end up, that dug ungraciously and painfully into his ribs.

He straightened the revolver in his pocket—and the touch of the weapon seemed to clear his faculties and fling him with a sudden jolt from the borderland of sleepy, mental indolence into a whirl of mental activity.

He remembered Millman. Millman and the revolver were indissolubly associated. Only Millman had returned the money. That was the strangest part of it. Millman had returned the money. It was over there now on the floor in the dress-suit case. He remembered his scene with Millman. He remembered that he had deliberately fanned

his passion into a white heat. He should therefore be in an unbridled rage with Millman now—only he wasn't.

Nor would that anger seemingly return—even at his bidding. Instead, there seemed to be a cold, deliberate, reasoned self-condemnation creeping upon him.

It was not pleasant. He tried to fight it off. It persisted. He was conscious of a slight headache. He stirred uneasily again upon the bed. Facts, however he might wish to avoid them, were cold-blooded, stubborn things. They began to assert themselves here in the quiet and the darkness.

Where was that sporting instinct of fair play of his of which he was so proud! Millman had *not* gone to that pigeon-cote with any treacherous motive. Millman had *not* played the traitor, either for his own ends, or at the instigation of the police. Millman, in blunt language, knowingly accepting the risk of being caught, when, already known as a prison bird, no possible explanation could avail him if he were found with the money in his possession, had gone in order to save a friend—and that friend was Dave Henderson.

Dave Henderson shook his head. No—he would not accept that—not so meekly as all that! Millman hadn't saved him from anything. He could have got the money himself all right when he got out, and the police would have been none the wiser.

He clenched his hands. A voice within

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him suddenly called him—*coward!* In that day in the prison library when he had felt himself cornered, he had been desperately eager enough for help. It was true, that as things turned out, he could have gone safely to the pigeon-cote himself, as he actually had done, but he had not foreseen the craft of Nicolo Capriano then, and his back had been to the wall then, and the odds had seemingly piled to an insurmountable height against him—and Millman, shifting the danger and the risk to his own shoulders, had stepped into the breach.

Millman had done that. There was no gainsaying it. Well, he admitted it, didn't he? He had no quarrel with Millman on that score now, had he? He scowled savagely in the darkness. It was Millman with his infernal, quixotic and overweening honesty that was the matter. That was what it was!

His quarrel with Millman lay in the fact that Millman was—an *honest man*.

He sat bolt upright in bed, his hands clenched suddenly again. Why hadn't Millman kept his honesty where it belonged? If Millman felt the way he did after going to the pigeon-cote and getting that money, why hadn't Millman stuck to his guns the way an ordinary man would, instead of laying down like a lamb—why hadn't he fought it out man to man, until the better man won—and that money went back, or it didn't? Fight! That was it—fight! If Millman had only fought it out—like an ordinary man—and—

"Be *honest*—at least with yourself!" whispered that inner voice quietly. "Millman was just as honest with you as he was with his own soul. He kept faith with you in the only way he could—and still keep faith with himself. Did he throw you down—Dave?"

For a moment Dave Henderson did not stir—he seemed mentally and physically in a strange and curious state of suspended animation. And then a queer and twisted smile flickered across his lips.

"Yes, he's white!" he muttered. "By God, the whitest man on earth—that's Millman! Only—damn him! Damn him, for the hole he's put me in!"

Yes, that was it! He had it at last, and

exactly now! Over there on the floor in the dress-suit case was the money; but it wasn't the money that he had taken a gambler's risk and a sporting chance to get; it wasn't the money he had fought like a wild-cat for—it was Millman's money. It wasn't the money he had staked his all to win—he staked nothing here. It was another man's stake. Over there was the money, and he was free to use it—if he chose to take it as the price of another man's loyalty, the price that another man paid for having taken upon himself the risk of prison bars and stone walls again because that other man believed his *risk* was substituted for the *certainty* that Dave Henderson would otherwise incur that fate!

The inner voice came quietly again—but it held a bitter gibe.

"What is the matter? Are you in doubt about anything? Why don't you get up, and undress, and go to bed, and sleep quietly? You've got the money now, you're fixed for all your life, and nothing to worry you—Millman pays the bills."

"Five years!" Dave Henderson muttered. "Five years of hell—for nothing?"

His face hardened. That was Nicolo Capriano lying over there on his bed, wasn't it?—and plucking with thin, blue-tipped fingers at the coverlet—and eying him with those black eyes that glittered virulently—and twisting bloodless lips into a sardonic and contemptuous sneer. And why was that barbed tongue of Nicolo Capriano pouring out such a furious and vicious flood of vituperation?

Another vision came—an oval face of great beauty, but whose expression was inscrutable; whose dark eyes met his in a long and steady gaze; and from a full, white, ivory throat, mounting upward until it touched the wealth of hair that crowned the forehead, a tinge of color brought a more radiant life. What would Teresa say?

His hands swept again and again, nervously, fiercely, across his eyes. In the years of his vaunted boast that neither hell nor the devil would hold him back, he had not dreamed of this. A thief! Yes, he had been a thief—but he had never been a piker! He wasn't a vulture, was he, to feed and gorge on a friend's loyalty?



He snarled suddenly. Honesty! What was honesty? Millman was trying to hold himself up as an example to be followed—eh? Well, that was Millman's privilege, wasn't it? And, after all, how honest was Millman? Was there anybody who was intrinsically honest? If there were, it might be different—it might be worth while then to be honest.

But Millman could afford that hundred thousand; Millman had said so himself; it didn't mean anything to Millman. If, for instance, it took the last penny Millman had to make good that money there might be something in honesty to talk about; but that sort of honesty didn't exist, either in Millman or in any other human being.

He had yet to see any one who would sacrifice all and everything in an absolutely literal way upon the altar of honesty as a principle. Every one had his price. His price had been one hundred thousand dollars; he wouldn't steal, say, a hundred dollars—and a hundred dollars was probably an even greater matter to him than a hundred thousand was to Millman, and—

He brought his mental soliloquy roughly to an end with a low, half angry, half perturbed exclamation. What had brought him to weigh the pros and cons of honesty anyway! He had never been disturbed on that score in those five years behind prison bars! Why now? It wasn't that that concerned him, that held him now in the throes of a bitter mental conflict, that dismayed him, that tormented him, that mocked at the hell of torture he would—if he yielded—have endured in vain, that grinned at him out of the darkness sardonically, and awaited with biting irony his decision.

It didn't matter what degree of honesty Millman possessed; it was Millman's act, in its most material and tangible sense, that threatened now to crush him.

Both hands, like gnarled knobs, went above his head. He was a thief; but, by God, he was a man! If he kept that money there he became a puling, whining beggar, sneaking and crawling his way through life on—*charity!* Charity! Oh, yes, he might find a softer name for it; but, by any name, he would none the less feed to the day he

died, like a parasite and a damned puny, pitiful whelp and cur, on another man's—charity!

"Give it back—no!" he whispered fiercely through set lips. "I've paid too much—it's mine—I've paid for it with the sweat of hell! It's mine! I will not give it back!"

"Are you sure?" whispered that inner voice. "It begins to look as though there were something in life, say, an *honest* pride that was worth more than money—even to you, Dave."

He sprang restively from the bed to the floor, and groped his way across the room to the light. He was in for a night of it—subconsciously he realized that, subconsciously he realized that he would not sleep, but subconsciously he was prompted to get his clothes off and obtain, lacking mental ease, what physical comfort he could.

He turned on the light, and the act diverted his thoughts momentarily. He did not seem to remember that he had ever turned off that light, but rather, in fact, that the light had been on when Dago George had left the room, and he, Dave Henderson, had flung himself down on the bed. It was rather strange! His eyes circled the room curiously, narrowed suddenly as they fell upon the dress-suit case, and upon one of the catches that appeared to have become unfastened—and with a bound he reached the dress-suit case and flung open the lid.

The money was gone.

## CHAPTER VI.

### HALF AN ALLY.

**M**OTIONLESS, save that his lips twitched queerly, Henderson stood erect, and stared down into the pillaged dress-suit case. And then his hands clenched slowly—tightened—and grew white across the knuckles.

The money was gone! The agony of those days and nights, when, wounded, he had fled from the police, the five years of prison torment which he had endured, seemed to pass with lightning swiftness in review before him—and to mock him, and

to become a ghastly travesty. The money was gone!

The pillaged dress-suit case seemed to leer and mock at him, too. He might have saved himself that little debate, which he had not settled, and which was based upon a certain element of ethics that involved the suggestion of charity. It was settled for him now. He *owed* Millman now one hundred thousand dollars, only the choice as to whether he would pay it or not was no longer his, and—

Damn it! *The money was gone!* Could he not grasp that one, single, concrete, vital fact, and act upon it, without standing here with his brain, like some hapless yokel's, agog and maundering? The money was gone! Gone! Where? When? How? He could only have been asleep for a short time, surely. He wrenched his watch suddenly from his pocket. Three o'clock! It was three o'clock in the morning! Five hours! He had been asleep five hours, then! He must have slept very soundly that any one could have entered the room without arousing him!

His lips hardened. He was alert enough now, both mentally and physically. He stepped over to the door. It was still locked. His eyes swept around the room. The window, then! What about the window?

He felt suddenly for his money-belt beneath his underclothing as he started across the room. The belt was there. That, at least, was safe. A twisted smile came to his lips. Naturally! His brain was exhibiting some glimmer of sense and cohesion now!

It was evident enough that no one, since no one knew anything about it, had been specifically after that package of bank-notes. It could only have been the work of a sneak thief—who had probably stumbled upon the greatest stroke of luck in his whole abandoned career. It was undoubtedly a quarter of the city wherein sneak thieves were bred! The man would obviously not have been fool enough, with a fortune already in his possession, to have risked the frisking of his sleeping person.

Was the man, then, an inmate of the Iron Tavern, say, that greasy waiter, for

instance; or had he gained entrance from outside; or, since the theft might have taken place hours ago, was it a predatory hanger-on at the bar who had sneaked his way up-stairs and—

The window, too, was locked! It was queer! Both window and door locked! How had the man got in—and got out again?

Mechanically he unlocked and raised the window—and with a quick jerk of his body forward, leaned out excitedly. Was this the answer—this platform of a fire-escape that ran between his window and the next? But his window had been *locked!*

He stood there hesitant. Should he arouse Dago George? He could depend upon and trust Dago George, thanks to Nicolo Capriano; but to go to Dago George meant that confidences must be led up to which he desired to give to no man. His brain seemed suddenly to become frantic.

The money was gone—his, or Millman's, or the devil's, it didn't matter which now—the money was gone, swallowed up in the black of that night out there, without a clue that offered him a suggestion even on which to act. But he couldn't stand here inactive like a fool, could he? Nor—his brain jeered at him now—could he go out and prowl around the city streets, and ask each passer-by if he or she had seen a package of bank-notes whose sum was one hundred thousand dollars!

What else was there, then, to do, except to arouse Dago George? Dago George, from what Nicolo Capriano had said, would have many strings to pull—underground strings. That was it—*underground* strings! It wasn't a *police* job!

He turned from the window, took a step back across the room, and halted again abruptly. *What was that?* It came again—a faint, low, rustling sound, and it seemed to come from the direction of the fire-escape.

In an instant he was back at the window, but this time he crouched down at the sill. A second passed while he listened, and from the edge of the sash strained his eyes out into the darkness, and then his hand crept into his side-pocket and came out with his



revolver. Some one, a dark form, blacker than the night shadows out there, was crawling from the next window to the fire-escape.

Dave Henderson's lips thinned. Just a second more until that "some one" was half-way out and half-way in, and at a disadvantage, and—*now!*

With a spring, lithe and quick as a cat, Dave Henderson was through the window, and the dark form was wriggling and squirming in his grasp, and a low cry came—and Dave Henderson swore sharply under his breath.

It was a woman! A woman! Well, that didn't matter! One hundred thousand dollars was gone from his dress-suit case, and this woman was crawling to the fire-escape from the next room at three o'clock in the morning—that was what mattered!

They were on the iron platform now, and he pushed her none too gently along it toward the window of his own room—into the light. And then his hands dropped from her as though suddenly bereft of power, and as suddenly lifted again, and, almost fierce in their intensity, gripped at her shoulders, and forced her face more fully into the light.

"Teresa!" he whispered hoarsely. "You—Teresa!"

She was trying to smile, but it was a tremulous effort. The great, dark eyes, out of a face that was ivory white, lifted to his, and faltered, and dropped again.

"It's you, Teresa—isn't it?" His voice, his face, his eyes, were full of incredulous wonder.

Her lips were still quivering in their smile. She nodded her head in a sort of quaint, wistful way.

The blood was pounding and surging in his veins. Teresa! Teresa was here, standing here before him! Not that fantom picture that had come to him so often in the days and nights since he had left San Francisco—the glorious eyes, half veiled by the long lashes, though they would not look at him, were real, this touch of his hands upon her shoulders, this touch that thrilled him, was real, and—

Slowly his hands fell away from her; and as though to kill and stifle joy, and mock

at gladness, and make sorry sport of ecstasy, there came creeping upon him doubt, black, ugly, and bitter as the lees of gall.

Yes, it was Teresa! And at sight of her there had come suddenly and fully, irrefutably, the knowledge that he cared for her; that love, which comes at no man's bidding, had come to him for her. Yes, it was Teresa! But what was she doing here? In view of that money, gone in the last few hours from his dress-suit case, what *could* Teresa Capriano be doing here in the next room to his?

He laughed a little, low, sharply—and turned his head away. His hands clenched. Love! How could he love—and doubt! How could he love—and condemn the one he loved unheard! He looked at her again now; and the blood in his veins, as though overriding now some obstacle that had damned its flow, grew swifter, and his pulse quickened. How could he doubt—Teresa!

But it was Teresa who spoke.

"We are standing here in the light, and we can be seen from everywhere around," she said in a low tone. "You—there is danger. Turn the light off in your room."

"Yes," he said mechanically, and stepping back into his room, turned off the light. He was beside her again the next instant. Danger! His mind was mulling over that. What danger? Why had she said that? What was its significance in respect of her presence here? The questions came crowding to his lips. "Danger? What do you mean?" he asked tensely. "And how did you get here, Teresa? And why? Was it your father who sent you? There is something that has gone wrong? The police—"

She shook her head.

"My father died the night you went away," she said.

He drew back, startled. Nicolo Capriano—dead! Her father—dead! He could not seem somehow to visualize Nicolo Capriano as one dead. The man's mentality had so seemed to triumph over his physical ills, that, sick though he had been, Nicolo Capriano had seemed to personify and embody vitality and life itself. Dead! He drew in his breath sharply. Then she was alone, this little figure standing here in the

darkness beside him, high up here in the world of night, with a void beneath and around them, strangely, curiously cut off, even in a physical sense, from any other human touch or sympathy—but his.

He reached out and found her hand, and laid it between both his own.

"I—I'm no good at words," he fumbled. "They—they won't come. But he was the best friend I ever had in life, too. And so I—"

"Don't say that! Don't! You mustn't! Do you hear, you mustn't!" Her hand that lay in his was suddenly clenched, and she was striving to draw it away. "It isn't true! I—that is why I came—I came to tell you. He was not your friend. He—he betrayed you."

He held her hand tighter—in a grip that made her efforts to escape pitifully impotent. And, almost fiercely, he drew her closer, trying to read her face in the darkness.

"He betrayed me! Nicolo Capriano *betrayed* me!" His mind was suddenly in riot. Incredulity and amazement mingled with a sickening fear that her words were literally true—the money was gone! And yet—and yet—Nicolo Capriano—a traitor! His words rasped now. "Do you know what you are saying, Teresa? Quick! Answer me! Do you know what you are saying?"

"I know only too well." Her voice had broken a little now. "I know that the money was taken from your room to-night. Please let my hand go. I—you will hate me in a moment—for—for, after all, I am his daughter. Will you please let me go, and I will tell you."

Mechanically he released her.

She turned half away from him, and leaned on the iron handrail of the platform, staring down into the blackness beneath her.

"Dago George took it—an hour ago," she said.

"Dago George!" Dave Henderson straightened. "Ah, so it was Dago George, was it!" He laughed with sudden menace, and turned impulsively toward the window of his room.

"Wait!" she said, and laid a hand de-

tainingly upon his sleeve. "The money, I am sure, is safe where it is, until daylight, anyway. I—I have more to tell you. It—it is not easy to tell. I—I am his daughter. Dago George was one of my father's accomplices in the old days in San Francisco. That letter which I wrote for my father meant nothing that it said; it contained a secret code that made you a marked man from the moment you delivered it here, and—"

"You, too!" There was bitter hurt in Dave Henderson's voice. And then suddenly he threw his shoulders back. "I don't believe you!" he flung out fiercely. "I don't understand how you got here, or what you are doing here, but you *wrote* that letter—and I don't believe it was a trap. Do you understand, Teresa—I don't believe you!"

She raised her head—and it seemed that even in the darkness he caught the sudden film of tears in her eyes, and saw the lips part in a quivering smile. She shook her head slowly then.

"It was not what I wrote," she said. "It was what my—what he added afterward when he signed it. *Con amore*—that was the secret code, and—"

"But you did not know that, then—Teresa!" There was a strange, triumphant uplift in his voice. "I remember! It was while you were out of the room. Did I not say I did not believe you!"

Her lips were still quivering, but the smile was gone.

"No, I did not know then," she said. "But his shame is my shame, nothing can alter that—I am his daughter. I did not know it until after you had gone—and then—and then my father had a—a sudden attack—and that night he died. I—there was only one thing that I could do. I had no way of warning you except to try and get here before you did, or at least to get here before Dago George had gone too far. There—there were things I had to do in San Francisco—and then I came as quickly as I could.

"I got here to-night. I found that you were already here—just a little ahead of me, and that you had given Dago George the letter. I had only one chance then—



to make Dago George believe that I had come, since my father was dead, to carry on the plot against you where my father had left off. Dago George had no suspicions. He knew me." Her voice held a sudden merciless note. "I was a Capriano. He told me that you were up-stairs here, drugged, and he gave me the room next to yours."

"Drugged!" Dave Henderson passed his hand across his eyes. That accounted for a great deal! He remembered the slight headache with which he had awakened; he was suddenly conscious of it now. "Drugged!" he repeated.

"In a way," she said, "I was too late. But Dago George, of course, did not know any details, and he had not gone any further than that. He had just left you in your room when I came. He had not, of course, heard from my father, since my father was dead, and he drugged you so that, during the night, he could have free access to your room and your belongings, and find out what he could about you. I—I thought to turn him from that purpose by telling him enough of the truth to make him content to wait patiently and watch your movements until you had the money in your possession.

"Do—do you understand? He said the effects of the drug would wear off in a few hours, and I meant to warn you then, and—and we would both make our escape from here. I—that is why I told you there was danger. Dago George would stop at nothing. He has a band of men here in New York that I know are as unscrupulous as he is; and this place here, I am only too sure, has been the trap for more than one of his victims."

She paused. Her voice, though guarded, had grown excited, and a little breathless.

It was a moment before Dave Henderson spoke.

"And you?" His voice was hoarse. "If Dago George had found you out you wouldn't have had a chance for your life! And you knew that!"

"Yes," she said quietly, "I knew that. But that has no place here. There was no other way."

"And you did this for me?" His hands

reached out and fell upon the girl's slight shoulders, and tightened there. "You did this for me, Teresa?"

"I did it because there was no other thing to do, because—because"—her voice lost its steadiness—"it was my father's guilt."

He drew her closer, with a strange, gentle, remorseless strength.

"And for no other reason, Teresa?" he whispered. "For only that? If it had not been your father? If he had had nothing to do with it? If it had been only me?" Her face was very close to his now, so close that the quick, sudden panting of her breath was upon his cheek, so close that her lips were almost warm upon his own.

She put out her hands and pressed them with a curious gentleness against his face to ward him off.

"Don't!" Her voice was very low. "Have you forgotten that I am the daughter of the man who meant—who meant perhaps to take your life; that I am the daughter of a criminal?"

"And I"—he had her wrists now and was holding the soft, trembling hands against his cheeks—"I am a thief."

"Oh, don't!" She was almost crying now. "You—you don't understand. There is more. I meant, if I could, to take that money from you myself."

In sheer astonishment he let her go and drew back a step. She seemed to waver unsteadily on her feet there in the darkness for an instant, and her hand groped out to the platform railing for support; and then suddenly she stood erect, her face full toward him, her head thrown back a little on her shoulders.

"I meant to get it, if I could—to give it back to those to whom it belongs. And I still mean to." Her voice was quiet now, quivering a little, but bravely under control.

"All my life has been a lie. I lived a lie the night I let you go away without a word of protest about what you were going to do. I do not mean to throw the blame upon my father, but with his death all those old ties were broken. Will you try to understand me? I must either now go on in the old way, or go straight with my conscience and with God. I could not bargain with God or my conscience.

"It was all or nothing. I had a share in enabling you to hoodwink the police. Therefore, if you came into possession of that money again, I was as much a thief as you were, and as guilty. But I owed it to you, above all other things, to warn you of your danger, and so I came here to warn you first, and afterward, when you were safe from Dago George's reach, to watch you and get the money myself if I could. Do you understand?"

"When I came here to-night I did not think that you had yet got the money; but something that Dago George said made me think that perhaps you had, and that perhaps he thought so, too. And so I sat there in my room in the darkness waiting until all was quiet in the house, and I could steal into your room and search, if I could get in through either door or window, and then, whether I got in or not, or whether the search was successful or not, I meant to wait until the drug had worn itself off sufficiently to enable me to arouse you and tell you to get away.

"And then—I do not know what time it was—I heard some one steal up the stairs and go to the door of your room and work at the lock very, very quietly, and go into your room, and move around in there. I was listening then with my ear to the partition, and I could just make out the sounds, no more. I should never have heard anything had I been asleep; there was never enough noise to have awakened me.

"The footsteps went down-stairs, then, and I opened my door and waited until I heard them, louder, as though caution were no longer necessary, on the second landing, and then I stole down-stairs myself. There was a light in Dago George's room. It came through the fanlight. The door was closed. But by leaning over the bannister of the lower flight of stairs, I could see into the far end of the room through the fanlight. He had a package in his hand. It was torn at one corner, and from this he pulled out what I could see were a number of yellow-back bank-notes.

"He looked at these for a moment, then replaced them in the package, and went to his safe. He knelt down in front of it, laid the package on the floor beside him, and

began to open the safe. I heard some one moving above then, and I tiptoed back, and hid in what seemed to be a small private dining-room on the second floor. I heard some one go quietly down the stairs, and then I came back here to my room to wait until I could arouse you. The money was in Dago George's safe. It would be there until morning, at least, and on that account it no longer concerned me for the moment.

"And then after a long time I heard you move in your room. It was safer to come this way than to go out into the hall, for I did not know what Dago George might intend to do with you, or with me, either, now that he had the money. He would not hesitate to get rid of us both if his cunning prompted him to believe that was his safest course. And I was afraid of that. Only you and I, besides himself, knew anything about that money, and he had got it into his possession. Do you understand? When I heard you move, I started through the window to go to you, and—and you saw me."

Dave Henderson had sunk his elbows on the iron railings, his chin resting in his hands, and was staring at the strange, fluted sky-line where the buildings jabbed their queer, uneven points up into the night. It was a long time before he spoke.

"It's kind of queer, Teresa," he said slowly. "It's kind of queer. You're something like a friend of—like a man I know. It's kind of queer. Well, you've given me my chance, you've risked your life to give me my chance, you've played as square as any woman God ever made; and now what are you going to do?"

She drew in her breath sharply, audibly, as though startled, as though his words were foreign, startlingly foreign to anything she had expected.

"I—have I any choice?" she answered. "I know where the money is, and I must notify the authorities. I must tell the police so that they can get it."

Dave Henderson's eyes, a curious smile in them that the darkness hid, shifted from the sky-line to the little dark figure before him.

"And do you think I will let you tell the police where that money is?" He laughed quietly. "Did you think you could come



and tell me just where it was, and then calmly leave me, and walk into the police station with the news, and get away with it?"

She shook her head.

"I know!" she said. "You think it's a woman's inconsistency. It isn't! I didn't know what you would do. I don't know now. But I have told you all. I have told you what I intend to do, if I possibly can. I had to tell you first. If I was to be honest all the way with myself, I had first of all to be honest with you. After that I was free. I don't know what you will do. I don't see what you can do now. But if you keep me from notifying the police to-night, there is to-morrow, and after that another to-morrow. No matter what happens to you or to me, I am going through with this. I"—her voice choked suddenly—"I have to."

Dave Henderson straightened up.

"I believe you!" he said under his breath. "After what you've done, I'd be a fool if I didn't. And you're offering me a square fight, aren't you, Teresa?" He was laughing in that quiet, curious way again. "Well, I'm not sure I want to fight. Just before I found out that money was gone, I was wondering if I wouldn't give it back myself."

"*Dave!*" It was the first time she had ever called him by his name, and it came now from her lips in a quick, glad cry. Her hands caught at both his arms. "Dave, do you mean that? Do you? Dave, it is true? You're honest, after all?"

He turned his head away, a sudden hard and bitter smile on his lips.

"No," he said. "And I haven't made up my mind yet about giving it back, anyway. But maybe I had other reasons for getting even as far as I did. Not honesty. I can't kid myself on that. I am a thief."

Her fingers were gripping at his arms with all their strength, as though she were afraid that somehow he would elude and escape her.

"You were a thief"—it seemed as though her soul were in the passionate entreaty in her voice now—"and I was the daughter of a criminal, with all the hideous memories of crime and evil that stretch back to child-

hood. But that is in the past, Dave, if we will only leave it there, isn't it? It—it doesn't have to be that way in all the years that are coming. God gives us both a chance to—to make good. I'm going to take mine. Won't you take yours, Dave? You were a thief, but how about from now on?"

He stood rigid, motionless; and again his face was turned away from her out into the darkness.

"From now on." He repeated the words in a low, wondering way.

"Yes!" she cried eagerly. "From now on, Dave. Let us get away from here and go and notify the police that Dago George has that money, and—and—and then, you see, the police will come and get it and return it where it belongs, and that will end it all."

It was a moment before he turned toward her again, and then his face was white and drawn and haggard. He shook his head.

"I can't do that," he said hoarsely. "There are more reasons than one why I can't do that." Her hands were clasping his arms. He forced them gently from their hold now, and took them in his own, and drew her closer to him, and held her there. "And one of those reasons is you, Teresa. You've played fair with me, and I'll play fair with you. I—I can't buy you with a fake. I—"

"Dave!" She struggled to free herself. "Dave, you—"

"Wait!" His voice was rough with emotion. "We'll talk straight—there isn't any other way. I—I think I loved you, Teresa, that night, the first time I saw you, when you stood on the threshold of your father's room. To-night I know that I *love* you, and—"

"Dave!"

His hold had brought her very close again to him. He could see a great crimson tide flood and sweep the white and suddenly averted face.

"Wait!" he said again. "I think I have learned other things as well to-night—that you care, Teresa, too, but that the stolen money stands between you and me. That is what I mean by buying you and your love with a fake. If I returned the money

on that account it would not be because I had suddenly become honest—which is the one thing above all else that you ask for.

"It would not be for honesty's sake, but because I was a hypocrite and dishonest with you, and was letting the money go because I was getting something for it that was worth more to me than the money—because I was making a good *bargain* that was cheap at a hundred thousand dollars. I can't make myself believe that I feel a sense of honesty any more to-night than I did the night I first took that money, and I would be a cur to try to make you think I did."

He could feel her hands tremble in his; he could see the sweet face, the crimson gone from it, deathly pale again. Her lips seemed quivering for words, but she did not speak. And suddenly he dropped her hands; and his own hands clenched, and clenched again, at his sides. There was bitter mockery at himself stirring and moiling in his brain. "You fool! You fool!" a voice cried out. "She's yours! Take her! All you've got to do is change your tune; she'll believe you; so if you're not honest, why don't you *steal* her?"

"Listen!" It seemed as though he were forcing himself to speak against his will. "There is another reason; but, first, so that you will understand, there is Millman. It is too long a story to tell you all of it. Millman is the man I spoke of—who is honest—like you. I told him when I was in prison where the money was, and I thought he had double-crossed me. Instead, he gave it back to me to-night—that is how I got it so soon." He laughed out sharply, bitterly. "But Millman said if I didn't give it back to the estate of the man from whom I took it, he would out of his own pocket, because, for me, he had been a thief, too."

"Do you understand? That's why I said I didn't know what I was going to do. My God—I—I don't know yet. I know well enough that if the police were tipped off to-night, and got the money, that would let Millman out of paying it; but that's not the point. I can't squeal now, can I? I can't go sneaking to the police and say: 'There it is in Dago George's safe; I can't get my own paws on it again, so I've turned honest,

and you can go and take it!' I wouldn't like to face Millman and tell him the money had gone back *that* way—because I couldn't help it—because it had been taken from me, and I was doing the smug act in a piker play!"

She stepped toward him quickly.

"Dave," she whispered tremulously, "what do you mean? What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to get that money from Dago George," he said in a flat voice. "I'll get that money if I go through hell again for it, as I've been through hell for it already. Then, maybe it 'll go back where it came from, and maybe it won't; but if it does go back, it 'll go back from *Dave Henderson*—not Dago George!"

She clutched frantically at his arm.

"No, no!" she cried out.

"Listen!" he said. "You have said you meant that money should be returned if it were within your power to accomplish it. I understand that."

"Well, no matter what the result, to Dago George or to me, I am going down there to get that money—if I can. But if I get it, I do not promise to return it."

"Remember that! I promise nothing."

"So you are free to leave here; and if you think, and perhaps you will be right, that the surest way to get the money back is to go instantly to the police, I shall not blame you. If the police can beat me to it before I settle with Dago George, they win—that's all. But in any case, it is not safe for you to stay in this place, and so—"

"I was not thinking of that!" she said in a low voice. "Nor shall I leave this house—until you do. I—I am afraid—for you. You do not know Dago George."

He did not stir for a moment, and then, with some great, overwhelming impulse upon him, he took her face in both his hands, and held it there upturned to his, and looked into the great dark eyes until the lashes dropped and hid them from his gaze.

"Teresa," he whispered low, "there are some things that are worse than being a thief. I couldn't lay down my hand now, if I wanted to, could I? I can't quit now, can I? I can't *crawl*. I took that money;



and, whether I mean to give it back myself or keep it, I'd rather go out for good than tell the police it's there, and see the sneer for an honest man—turned honest because he had lost his nerve, and didn't dare go after the money and face the risk of a show-down with Dago George, which was the only way in which he could stay *dishonest*.

"Teresa, you see, don't you?" His voice was passionate, hungry in its earnestness. "Teresa, what would you do—play the game or quit?"

The lashes lifted, and for a moment the dark eyes looked steadily into his, and then they were veiled again.

"I will wait here for you," she said.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE MAN WITH THE FLASH-LIGHT.

THE silence seemed like some uncanny, living, breathing thing. It seemed to beat and pulsate until the ear-drums throbbed with it. It seemed to become some mad, discordant chorus, in which every human emotion vied with every other one that it might prevail over all the rest: a savage fury, and a triumphant love, a mighty hope, and a bitter dismay; joy and a chill, ugly fear.

And the chorus rose and clashed, and it seemed as though some wild, incoherent battle was joined, until first one strain after another was beaten down and submerged, and put to rout, until out of the chaos and turmoil, dominant, supreme, arose fury, merciless and cold.

Dave Henderson crept along the upper hall. The pocket flash-light in his hand—one of his purchases on the way East—winked through the blackness, the round, white ray disclosing for a second's space the head of the stairs; and blackness fell again.

He began to descend the stairs cautiously. Yes, that was it—fury! Out of that wild riot in his brain that was what remained now. It drew his face into hard, pitiless lines, but it left him most strangely cool and deliberate—and the more pitiless.

It was Dago George who was the object of that fury, not Nicolo Capriano.

That was strange, too, in a way! For it

was Nicolo Capriano who had done him the greater wrong; Dago George was no more than the other's satellite; but Nicolo Capriano's treachery seemed tempered somehow—by death perhaps—by that slim figure that he had left standing out there in the darkness; his brain refused to reason it out to a logical conclusion; it held tenaciously to Dago George. It seemed as though there were a literal physical itch at his finger-tips to reach a throat-hold and choke the oily, lying smile from the suave, smug face of that hypocritical bowing figure that had offered him a glass of wine, and like a damnable hound had drugged him, and—

Was that a sound, a sound of movement of some one stirring below there that he heard, or only an exaggerated imagination? He was half-way down the upper flight of stairs now, and he stopped to listen. No, there seemed to be nothing—only that silence that palpitated and made noises of its own; and yet he was not satisfied; he could have sworn that he had heard some one moving about.

He went on down the stairs again, but still more cautiously now. There was no reason why there *shouldn't* be some one moving about, even at this hour. It might be Dago George himself. Dago George might not have gone to bed again yet. It was an hour, Teresa had said, since the man had come up-stairs and stolen the money. Or it might be some accomplice who was with Dago George.

He remembered Teresa's reference to the bands of blacklegs over whom Dago George was in command; and he remembered that some one had come down the stairs behind her and Dago George. But Teresa herself had evidently been unseen, for there had been no attempt to find or interfere with her. It had probably therefore been—well, any one!

It presented possibilities.

It might have been an accomplice, or a prowling guest, if there were other guests in this unsavory hostelry; or a servant, for some unknown reason, nosing about, if any of the disreputable staff slept in the place at night—the cook, or the greasy waiter, or the bartender, or any of the rest of them;

though in a place like this functionaries of that sort were much more likely to go back to their own homes after their work was over. It would not be at all unlikely that Dago George, in view of his outside pernicious activities, kept none of the staff about the place at night.

Dave Henderson's jaws closed with a vicious snap. Useless speculation of this sort got him nowhere, he would find out soon enough. If Dago George were not alone, there were still several hours till daylight; and he could wait his chance with grim patience. He was concerned with only one thing—to square accounts with Dago George in a way that would both satiate his fury and force the man to disgorge the contents of his safe.

His jaws tightened. There was but one single, disturbing factor. If anything went wrong, Teresa was still up-stairs there. In every other respect the stage was set—for any eventuality.

He had even taken the precaution, before doing anything else, to get their valises, hers and his, out of the place, since in any case they meant to steal away from this accursed trap-house of Dago George. It had been simple enough to dispose of the baggage *via* the fire-escape, and through the yard, and down the lane, where the valises had found a temporary hiding-place in a shed, whose door, opening on the lane, he had discovered ajar, and simple enough, with Teresa's help in regaining the fire-escape from the ground, to return in the same way; but he had been actuated by more than the mere idea of being unimpeded in flight if a critical situation subsequently arose; and in this, his ulterior motive, he had failed utterly of success.

Teresa had agreed thoroughly in the wisdom of first removing their belongings; but she had refused positively to accompany and remain with the baggage herself, as he had hoped he might induce her to do. "I wouldn't be of any use there if—if anything happened," she had said. "I—I might be of some use here."

Neither argument nor expostulation had been of any avail. She was still above there—waiting.

He had reached the head of the lower

flight of stairs, and now he halted and stood motionless. There *was* a sound from below. It was neither imagination nor fancy; it was distinct and unmistakable—a low, rasping, metallic sound.

For an interval of seconds he stood there listening, then he shifted the flash-light, switched off now to his left hand, and his right hand slipped into his pocket for his revolver. He moved forward then silently, noiselessly, and, as he descended the stairway, paused at every step to listen intently again. The sound, with short, almost negligible interruptions, persisted; and with it now it seemed as though he could distinguish the sound of heavy breathing. And now it seemed, too, as though the blackness were less opaque, as though, while there was still no object discernible, the hallway below was in a sort of murk, and as though, from somewhere, light rays, that were either carefully guarded or had expended, through distance, almost all their energy, were still striving to pierce the darkness.

Tight-lipped now, a few steps farther down Dave Henderson leaned out over the banister, and hung there tensely, rigidly.

It was like looking upon some weird, uncannily clever effect that had been thrown upon a moving-picture screen.

The door of Dago George's room was wide open, and through this he could see a white circle of light, the rays thrown away from and in the opposite direction to the door. They flooded the face of a safe; and darkly behind the light itself two figures were faintly outlined, one kneeling at the safe, the other holding a flashlight and standing over the kneeling man's shoulder.

And now the nature of the sounds that he had not been able to define was obvious: it was the click of a ratchet, the rasp of a bit eating voraciously into steel, as the kneeling man worked at the face of the safe.

For a moment his eyes narrowed, half in sudden, angry menace, half in perplexity, he hung there gazing on the scene; and then, with all the caution that he knew, his weight thrown gradually on each separate tread to guard against a protesting creak, he went on down the stairs.

It was strange—damnable and most curiously strange! Was one of those figures in



there Dago George? If so, it would account for the presence of a second man, the one Teresa had heard coming down-stairs. But, if so, what was Dago George's game? Was the man going to put up the bluff that he had been robbed, and was therefore wrecking his own safe? That was an old gag! But what purpose could it serve Dago George in the present instance? It wasn't as though he, Dave Henderson, had *confided* the package to Dago George's keeping, and Dago George could take this means of cunningly securing it for himself. Dago George had stolen it, and logically the last thing Dago George would do would be to admit any knowledge of it, let alone flaunt it openly!

At the foot of the stairs Dave Henderson discarded that theory as untenable. But if, then, neither one of the two in there was Dago George, *where was Dago George?* It was a little beyond mere coincidence that a couple of marauding safe-breakers should have *happened* to select Dago George's safe to-night in the ordinary routine of their nefarious vocation. Coincidence as an explanation wasn't enough! It looked queer—extremely queer!

Where he had thought that no one, save Millman and himself, had known anything about the presence of that money in New York to-night, it appeared that a most amazing number were not only aware of it, but were intimately interested in it.

He smiled a little in the darkness, not pleasantly, as he crept now, inch by inch, along the hall toward the open door. He, too, was *interested* in that package of bank-notes in the safe! And, Dago George or the devil, it mattered very little which; there would be a showdown, very likely now a grim and very pretty little showdown, before the money left that room in any one's possession save his own!

From ahead, inside the room, there came a slight clatter, as though a tool of some sort had been dropped or tossed on the floor. It was followed by a muttered exclamation, and then a sort of breathless, but triumphant grunt. And then a voice, in a guttural undertone:

"Dere youse are, sport! Help yerself!"

Dave Henderson crouched back against

the wall. He was well along the hall now, and quite close enough to the doorway of Dago George's private domain to enable him, given the necessary light, to see the whole interior quite freely.

The door of the safe, in a dismantled condition, was swung open; strewn on the floor lay the kit of tools through whose instrumentality the job had been accomplished; and the man with the flash-light was bending forward, the white ray flooding the inside of the safe.

There came suddenly now a queer twitching to Dave Henderson's lips, and it came coincidentally with a sharp exclamation of delight from the man with the flash-light. In the man's hand was the original package of bank-notes, its torn corner identifying it in a flash to Dave Henderson, and evidencing with equal certainty to its immediate possessor that it was the object sought.

And now the man with the flash-light, without turning, reached out and laid the package on the desk beside the safe. The movement, however, sent the flash-light's ray in a jerky circle around the room, and mechanically Dave Henderson raised his hand and brushed it across his eyes.

Was *that* fancy—what he had seen? It was gone now, it was dark in there now, for the flash-light was boring into the safe again, and the man with the flash-light seemed intent on the balance of the safe's contents.

It had been only a glimpse, a glimpse that had lasted no longer than the time it takes a watch to tick, but it seemed to have mirrored itself upon Dave Henderson's brain so that he could still see it even in the darkness: It was a huddled form on the floor, close by the bed, just as though it had pitched itself convulsively out of the bed, and it lay there sprawled grotesquely, and the white face had seemed to grin at him in a horrid and contorted way.

It was the face of Dago George.

The man with the flash-light spoke suddenly over his shoulder to his companion:

"You've pulled a good job, Maggot!" he said approvingly. "Better than either Cunny or me was looking for, I guess. And so much so that I guess Cunny had better horn in himself before we close up for the

night. You beat it over to the joint and bring him back. Tell him there's some queer stuff in this safe besides what we were after and what we got—some gang stuff that 'll mabbe interest him, 'cause he said he wasn't very fond of Dago George.

"I don't know whether he'll want to take any of it or not, or whether he'd rather let the police have it when they wise up to this in the morning. He can look it over for himself. Tell him I want him to see it before I monkey with it myself. You can leave your watchmaker's tools there. You ought to be back in a little better than ten minutes if you hurry.

"We got a good hour and more yet before daylight, and before any of the crowd that work here gets back on the job, and until then we got the house to ourselves, but that's no reason for wasting any fleeting moments, so get a move on! See?"

"Sure!" grunted the other.

"Well, then, beat it!"

Footsteps sounded from the room, coming in the direction of the doorway, and Dave Henderson slipped instantly across the hall and edged in behind the door, that, opening back into the hall, afforded him both a convenient and secure retreat. The smile on his lips was more pleasant now. It was very thoughtful of the man with the flash-light—very! He cared nothing about the other man, who was now walking stealthily down the hall toward the front door; the money was still in that room in there! Also, he was glad to have had confirmed what he had already surmised—that Dago George slept alone in the place.

The front door opened and closed again softly. Dave Henderson stole silently across the hall again and crouched against the opposite wall once more, but this time almost at the door-jamb itself.

The flash-light, full on, lay on the desk. It played over the package of bank-notes, and sent back a reflected gleam from the nickel-work of a telephone instrument that stood a few inches further along on the desk. The man's form, his back to the door, and back of the light, was like a silhouetted shadow. It was quiet, silent now in the house. Perhaps five seconds passed, and then the man chuckled wheezingly.

Dave Henderson grew suddenly rigid. It startled him. Somewhere he had heard that chuckle before—somewhere. It seemed striving to stir and awaken memory. There was something curiously and strangely familiar about it, and—

The man, still chuckling, was muttering audibly to himself now.

"Sure, that's the dope! The Scorpion, eh? Cunny the Scorpion! Nice name! Well, we'll see who gets *stung*! I guess ten minutes' start ain't good enough, but if some one's chasing the Scorpion, he won't have so much time to chase me. Yes, I guess this is where I fade away—with the goods. By the time there's been anything straightened out, and even if he squeals if he's caught, I guess I'll be far enough away to worry—not!"

Dave Henderson's face was white and set as chiseled marble; but he did not move.

The man leaned abruptly forward over the desk, picked up the telephone, chuckled again, and then snatched the receiver from the hook. And the next instant, his voice full of well-simulated terror, he was calling wildly, frantically, into the transmitter:

"Central! Central! For God's sake! Quick! Help! I'm Dago George, the Iron Tavern! They're murdering me! Get the police! For God's sake, get the police! Tell them Cunny Smeeks is murdering me! Hurry! Quick! For God's—"

The man allowed the telephone and the unhooked receiver to crash abruptly to the floor. The cord, catching the flash-light, carried the flash-light, and it went out.

And then Dave Henderson moved. With a spring he was half-way across the room, and his own flash-light stabbed a lane of light through the blackness, and struck, as the other whirled with a startled cry, full on the man's face.

It was Booky Skarvan.

## CHAPTER VIII.

BOOKY SKARVAN PAYS HIS ACCOUNT.

THE little red-rimmed eyes blinked into the glare—it was the only color left in the white, flabby face—the red rim of the furtive little eyes. Booky



Skarvan's fat hand lifted and tugged at his collar, as though the collar choked him. He fell back a step and his heel crunched upon the telephone transmitter, and smashed it. And then Booky Skarvan licked his lips—and attempted a smile.

"I," mumbled Booky Skarvan, "I—I can't see your face. Who—who are you?" The sound of his own voice, husky and shaken as it was, seemed to bring him a certain reassurance. "What do you want? Eh? What do you want?" he demanded.

Dave Henderson made no reply. It seemed as though his mind, and soul, and body were engulfed in some primal, savage ecstasy.

Years swept their lightning sequence through his brain; hours, with the prison walls and iron bars around him, in which he had promised himself this moment, seemed to live their life and existence over again. He said no word; he made no sound.

With the flashlight still playing without a flicker of movement upon the other, he felt, with the back of his revolver hand, over Booky Skarvan's clothing, located in one of the pockets Booky Skarvan's revolver, and, with utter contempt for any move the man might make through the opening thus given him, hooked the guard of his own revolver on the little finger of the hand that held the flashlight, and unceremoniously jerked the other's weapon out from the pocket and tossed it to the far end of the desk. The flash-light lifted then and circled the walls of the room. Booky Skarvan's complaint had not gone unheeded. Booky Skarvan would have ample opportunity to see whose face it was! The flashlight found and held on the electric-light switch. It was on the opposite wall behind Booky Skarvan.

Dave Henderson shoved the man roughly out of the way, stepped quickly forward to the wall, switched on the light—and swung around to face Booky Skarvan.

For an instant Booky Skarvan stood there without movement, the little eyes dilating, the white face turning ashen and gray and then great beads of sweat sprang out upon the forehead—and a scream of abject terror pealed through the room.

"Go away!" screamed Booky Skarvan.

"You're dead! Go away! Go back to hell where you belong!" His hands clawed out in front of him. "Do you hear? You're dead—dead! Go away! Curse you, damn you—go away!"

Dave Henderson spoke through closed teeth:

"You ought to be satisfied then, Booky. You've wanted me dead for quite a while—for *five years*, haven't you?"

There was no answer.

Dave Henderson's eyes automatically swept around the now lighted room. Yes, that was Dago George there on the floor near the bed, lying on the side of his face, with a hideous gash across his head. The man was dead, of course; he couldn't be anything else. But, anyway, Dago George was as something apart, an extraneous thing. There was only *one* thing in the world, *one* thing that held mind and soul and body in a thrall of wild, seething, remorseless passion—that maudlin, groveling thing there, whose clawing hands had found the end of the desk, and who hung there with curious limpness, as though, because the knees sagged, the weight of his body was supported by his arms alone—that thing whose lips, evidently trying to form words, jerked up and down like flaps of flesh from which all nerve control had gone.

"Maybe you didn't know that I knew it was you who was back of that attempt to murder me that night—five years ago." Dave Henderson thrust the flashlight into his pocket and took a step forward. "Well, you know it now!"

A sweat-bead trickled down the fat, working face—and lost itself in a fold of flabby flesh.

"No!" Booky Skarvan found his tongue. "No! Honest to God, Dave!" he whined. "It was Baldy."

"Don't lie! I *know*!" There was a cold deadliness in Dave Henderson's tones. "Stand away from the desk a little, so that I can get a look at that telephone on the floor! I don't want any witness to what's going to happen here, and a telephone with the receiver off—"

"My God!" Booky Skarvan cried out wildly. "What are you going to do?"

"Yes, I guess it's out of commission."

Dave Henderson's voice seemed utterly detached; he seemed utterly to ignore the other for a moment, as he looked at the broken instrument.

Booky Skarvan, in an access of fear, mopped at his wet face, and his little red-rimmed eyes, like the eyes of a cornered rat, darted swift, frantic glances in all directions around the room.

"Dave, do you hear!" Booky Skarvan's voice rose thin and squealing. "Why don't you answer? Do you hear! What—what are you going to do?"

"It's queer, kind of queer, to find you here, Booky," said Dave Henderson evenly. "I guess there's a God—Booky. How did you get here—from San Francisco?"

Booky Skarvan licked at his dry lips and cowered back from the revolver that was suddenly outflung in Dave Henderson's hand.

"I—I followed the girl. I thought you'd opened up to the old man, and he'd bumped you off with that bomb to get the stuff for himself. I was sure of it when he died, and she beat it for here."

"And to-night?" Dave Henderson's voice was rasping now.

"I got the room opposite hers." Booky Skarvan gulped heavily; his eyes were fixed, staring now, as though fascinated by the revolver muzzle. "She came down-stairs. I followed her, but I don't know where she went to. I saw the package go into the safe. I could see through the fanlight over the door. I saw him"—Booky Skarvan's hand jerked out toward the huddled form on the floor—"I saw him put it there."

Mechanically, Dave Henderson's eyes followed the gesture, and narrowed for an instant in a puzzled, startled way. Had that dead man there *moved*? The body seemed slightly nearer to the head of the bed! Fancy! Imagination! He hadn't marked the exact position of the body, to begin with, and it was still huddled, still inert, still in the same sprawled, contorted position. His eyes reverted to Booky Skarvan.

"You had a man in here with you at work on that safe, a man you called Maggot, and you sent him, with that dirty brand of trickery of yours, to bring back

some one you called Cunny the Scorpion, with the idea that instead of finding you and the money here—they would find the police." There was a twisted, merciless smile on Dave Henderson's lips. "Where did you get into touch with your *friends*?"

Booky Skarvan's eyes were roving again, seeking some avenue of escape, it seemed. Dave Henderson laughed shortly, unpleasantly, as he watched the other. There was only the door and the window. But he, Dave Henderson, blocked the way to the door; and the window, as he knew through the not-too-cursory examination he had made of it when he had come down the fire-escape with the valises, was equally impassable. It had been in his mind then that perhaps he himself might gain entrance to Dago George's room through the window—only the old-fashioned iron shutters, carefully closed and fastened, had barred the way.

"Well?" He flung the word sharply at Booky Skarvan.

"I—Baldy knew the Scorpion." Booky Skarvan's fingers wriggled between his collar and his fat neck. "Baldy gave me a letter to him, and the Scorpion put one over on—on that fellow on the floor, and got me a room here up-stairs. And when I saw the money going into the safe I beat it for the Scorpion, and got him to give me a box-worker; so he got Maggot for me, and—"

"You hadn't the nerve, of course, when you saw Dago George putting the money in the safe, to tackle the job alone before the safe was locked!" There was grim, contemptuous irony in Dave Henderson's voice. "You're the same old Booky, aren't you—yellow as the sulfur pit of hell!" His face hardened. "Ten minutes you said it would take them to get back. It's not very long, Booky. And say two or three minutes longer, or perhaps a little more for the police, allowing for the time it would take central to get her breath after that nerve-racking cry for help you sent her. Or maybe the police would even get here first—depending on how far away the station is. I'm a stranger here, and I don't know. In that case, there wouldn't be even ten minutes—and part of that is gone now. There isn't much time, Booky. But there's time



enough for you and me to settle our little account. I used to think of what I'd do to you when I got out on the other side of those iron bars. I used to think of it when I couldn't sleep at night in my cell. I kept thinking of it for *five years*, Booky—and here we are to-night at last, the two of us, you and me, Booky. I overheard Runt Mott explain the whole plant you had put up to murder me, so there's no use of you lying; there's no use of you starting that—that's one thing you haven't got time to do. You'd better clean house, Booky, for there isn't room enough in this world for the two of us—one of us has got to go."

Booky Skarvan had crouched against the end of the desk again. He cringed now, one arm upraised as though to ward off a blow.

"What—what are you going to do?" The words came thick and miserably. Their repetition seemed all that his tongue was capable of. "What—what are you going to do?"

"I can't *murder* you!" Dave Henderson's face had grown set and colorless—as colorless as his tone. "I wish to God I could! It's coming to you! But I can't! There's your revolver on the end of the desk. Take it!"

Again and again Booky Skarvan's tongue licked at his lips.

"What do you mean?" he whispered.

"You know what I mean!" Dave Henderson answered levelly. "Take it!"

"My God!" screamed Booky Skarvan. "No! My God—no! Not that!"

"Yes—*that!* You're getting what I swore I'd never give you—a chance. Either you or I are going out. Take that revolver, and for the first time in your life try and be a man, or else I'll fix you; and I'll fix it so that you won't move from here until your friend the Scorpion gets his chance at you for the pleasant little surprise you had arranged for him with your telephone trick, or until the police carry you out with a through ticket to the electric chair for what looks like murder over there on the floor. You understand, Booky? I'll make you fight, you cur! It's the only chance you've got for your life. Now—take it!"

Booky Skarvan wrung his hands together. He was trembling violently.

"There aren't very many of those ten minutes left, Booky," said Dave Henderson coldly. "But if you get in a lucky shot, Booky, you'd still have time to get away from here. And there's the money there, too—you could take that with you."

The man seemed near collapse. Great beads from his forehead ran down and over the sagging jowls. He moaned a little, and stared at the revolver that lay upon the desk, and reached out his hand toward the weapon, and drew his hand back again. He looked again at Dave Henderson, and at the muzzle of the revolver that covered him. He seemed to read something irrevocable and remorseless in both. Slowly, his mouth working, his face muscles twitching, he reached again to the desk and pulled the revolver to him, and then, his arm falling nervously, he held the weapon dangling at his side.

Dave Henderson's revolver was lowered until it pointed to the floor.

"When you lift your hand, Booky, it's the signal," he said in a monotone.

Booky Skarvan's knees seemed to bend and sag a little more—there was no other movement.

"I'm waiting," said Dave Henderson—and pulled the trigger of his revolver to put a shot into the floor.

There was the click of the falling hammer—no more. A grim smile played across Dave Henderson's lips. It was as well, perhaps, that he had tried in that way to startle, to *frighten*, this terrified, spineless cur who stood there into action! The cartridge that he had depended upon for his life had missed fire! He pulled the trigger again. The hammer clicked. He pulled again, his eyes never leaving Booky Skarvan's face. The hammer clicked.

For the fraction of a second the room seemed blurred to Dave Henderson. *The chambers of his revolver were empty!* His brain seemed to sicken, and then to recover itself, and leap into fierce, virile activity. He was at the mercy of that cringing hound there, if the other but knew it. It seemed as though all the devils of hell shrieked at him in unholy mirth. If he moved a step forward to rush, to close with the other, the very paroxysm of fear that possessed Booky

Skarvan would instinctively incite the man to fire.

There was one way, only one way—the electric-light switch behind him. If he could reach that without Booky Skarvan realizing the truth, there would be the darkness—and his bare hands. Well, he asked no more than that—only that Booky Skarvan did not get away. His bare hands were enough.

He moved back a single step, as though shifting his position, his face impassive, watching the dangling weapon in the other's shaky hand, watching the other's working lips. The chambers of his revolver were empty! How? When? It had been fully loaded when he lay down on the bed. Yes! He remembered! It was queer that it had twisted like that in his sleep. Dago George! It came in a lightning flash of intuition. Dago George, cautious to excite no suspicion, had been equally cautious to draw his, Dave Henderson's teeth!

He edged back another step, and stopped, as though rooted to the spot. Booky Skarvan, that dangling revolver in the other's hand, his own peril, all, everything that but an instant before had obsessed his mind, was blotted out from his consciousness as though it had never existed. That huddled form, that murdered man on the floor behind Booky Skarvan, that he could see over Booky Skarvan's shoulder, had raised his hand in a swift, sudden movement, and had thrust it under the mattress at the head of the bed, and had snatched out a revolver.

It was quick, quick as thought, quick as the winking of an eye. A shout of warning rose to Dave Henderson's lips, and was drowned in the report of the revolver-shot, deafening, racketing in the confined space. And, as though thrown into relief by the flash and the tongue flame of the revolver, a picture seemed to sear itself into Dave Henderson's brain: The up-flung arms of Booky Skarvan, the ghastly surprise on the sweat-beaded face, the fat body spinning grotesquely like a run-down top, and pitching forward to the floor. And through the lifting smoke, another face—Dago George's face, working, livid, blood-smirched, full of demoniacal triumph. And then a gurgling peal of laughter.

"Yes, and you, too, damn you!" gurgled Dago George. "You, too!"

The man was on his knees now, lurching there, the revolver swaying weakly, trying to draw its bead now on him, Dave Henderson. He moved with a spring to one side toward the door. The revolver, as though jerked desperately in the weak hand, followed him. He flung himself to the floor. A shot rang out. And then, as though through the flash again another picture lived: The revolver dropping from a hand that could no longer hold it, a graying face that swayed on shoulders which in turn rocked to and fro, and then a lurch, a thud, and the face was hidden between outsprawled arms, and Dago George did not move any more.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE ENDING OF THE NIGHT.

**M**ECHANICALLY, Dave Henderson rose to his feet, and for an instant stood as though, his mental faculties numbed, he were striving to grasp as a concrete thing some stark and horribly naked tragedy that his eyes told him was real, but which his brain denied and refused to accept. Thin layers of smoke, suspended, sinuous, floated in hideous little gray clouds about the room—like palls that sought to hide what lay upon the floor from sight, and, failing in their object, but added another grim and significant detail to the scene.

And then his brain cleared, and he jumped forward to bend first over Booky Skarvan and then over Dago George; and, where his mind had been unreceptive and numbed but an instant before, it was keen, swift and incisive now—the police who had been summoned—the Scorpion and his parasite yegg who were on the way back—there was no time to lose!

There was no one in the house to have heard the shots—Booky Skarvan had settled that point—no one except Teresa upstairs. But the shots might have been heard *outside*.

His ears throbbed with strange noises; those shots seemed still to be reverberating



and beating at his ear-drums. Yes, the shots might have been heard outside on the streets, or by some one in the next house. Was that some one at the front door now? He held his breath as he rose from Dago George's side. No, just the ringing in his ears; there wasn't any other sound. But there wasn't an instant to lose; both Booky Skarvan and Dago George were dead. There wasn't an instant to lose—only the instant he *must* take to make sure he made no false move here before he snatched up that package on the desk there and ran up-stairs, and, with Teresa, made his way out by the fire-escape.

He stooped and stretched out his hand to exchange his own empty revolver for the one that lay on the floor where it had fallen from Dago George's lifeless fingers, and, instead, drew his hand sharply back again. Fool! The police would investigate this wouldn't they? Booky Skarvan couldn't have been shot by an *empty* revolver! Well—he was moving toward the desk and back toward where Booky Skarvan lay—suppose he took Booky's revolver then? He shook his head. He did not need one bad enough for that.

It was better to let things remain as they were, and let the police draw their own conclusions, conclusions which, if nothing was interfered with, and he got away with the package of bank-notes, would point no inference that, by hook or crook, would open a clue which might lead to him. Was he so sure of that? Suppose the Scorpion had been let into Booky's confidence, and that the Scorpion when he got here should happen to be caught by the police—and *talked* to save himself?

A grim smile settled on Dave Henderson's lips as he thrust his useless revolver into his pocket, and, reaching out to the desk, picked up the package of bank-notes. Well, if anything came of the Scorpion, it couldn't be helped! And, after all, did it matter very much? It wasn't only Dago George and Booky Skarvan who were dead—Dave Henderson was dead, too!

It had been scarcely a minute since he had first risen to his feet; it was his mind sifting, weighing, arguing with itself that had seemed to use up priceless time,

whereas, in reality, in its swift working, it had kept pace with, and had even prodded him into speed in his physical movements. He was running now, the package of bank-notes in his hand, for the door. Dago George was dead. Booky Skarvan was dead. And if—

He staggered suddenly back, and reeled from the impact, as a man from just outside in the hallway launched himself ferociously forward across the threshold. The package spun from his hand to the floor. Half flung to his knees, Dave Henderson's arms shot out instinctively and wrapped themselves around his assailant's body.

Came a snarl and an oath, and Dave Henderson's head rocked back on his shoulders from a vicious short-arm jab that caught him on the point of the jaw. It dazed him; he was conscious only that he had not let go his hold, that his hands, like feeling tentacles, were creeping further up the man's body toward throat and shoulders, drawing his own body up after them into a more upright position. His head sang with the blow. A voice seemed to float from somewhere out of the air:

"That's the stuff, Maggot! Soak him!"

Dave Henderson's arms had locked now like steel bands around his assailant and were tightening, as the other's were tightening around him in turn. The dizziness was leaving him. They swung, rocking, to the strain. The man was strong! A face, a repellent, unshaven face, leered into his. Twice they swirled around, and then seemed to hang for an instant motionless, as though the strength of one exerted to its utmost was exactly counterbalanced by the strength of the other; and over the other's shoulder Dave Henderson could see another man, a man who laughed with ugly coolness, and who had flaming red hair and eyes of a blue so faded that they looked repulsive because they looked as though they were white.

Maggot and Cunny the Scorpion! There *had* been some one there in the front of the house—it had been Maggot and Cunny the Scorpion. And at any moment now there would be some one else—the police!

That nicety of balance was gone. They were struggling, lurching, staggering in each other's embrace again—he and this Maggot,

who snarled and cursed with panting breath. Their heads were almost on each other's shoulders. He could see the straining muscles in the other's neck standing out like great purple, swollen cords. And as he whirled now this way and that, he caught glimpses of the red-headed man. The red-headed man seemed to be quite unconcerned for the moment with his companion's struggle. He picked up the package of banknotes from the floor, examined it, dropped it again, and ran to Booky Skarvan's side.

A queer, hard smile came to Dave Henderson's lips. This panting thing with arms locked like a gorilla's around him seemed to be weakening a little—or was it a trick? He tightened his own hold, and edged his own hands a little higher up—and still a little higher. If he could only tear himself loose for the fraction of a second, and get his fingers on that panting throat! No, the man wasn't weakening so much after all! The man seemed to sense his intention; and with a sudden twist, each endeavoring to outmaneuver the other, they spun in a wider circle, like drunken dancers in some mad revel, and crashed against the wall, and rebounded from it and hung again, swaying like crazy pendulums, in the middle of the floor.

The red-headed man's voice came suddenly from across the room:

"Soak him, Maggot!"

That was the Scorpion. The Scorpion seemed to be taking some interest at last in something besides Booky Skarvan and the package of money.

A grunted oath from Dave Henderson answered.

"Damn it, I can't! Curse youse, why don't youse lend a hand!"

With a quick, sudden wrench, Dave Henderson tried to free himself. It resulted only in a wide swirl in a half-circle that almost pitched him, and with him the other, to the floor. But he saw the Scorpion now. The Scorpion had risen to his feet from Booky Skarvan's side, and was holding a revolver in his hand; and now the Scorpion's voice seemed to hold a sort of purring note, velvet in its softness.

"All right, then, Maggot! We might as well have a clean-up here, since he's started

it. I guess we came just about in time, or he'd have had the money as well as our fat friend there—that he got. It looks as though we ought to even up the score." The revolver lifted in the Scorpion's hand. "Jump away, Maggot, I'm going to lead the ace of trumps!"

The eyes were white, not blue; there was no blue in them; they were white—two little white spots across the room. They held a devil's menace in them, like the voice, like the purring voice that was hideous because it was so soft. God, could he *hold* this Maggot now; not wrench himself free, but *hold* the man here in his arms; keep Maggot *between* him and those white eyes, that looked like wicked little plague spots which had eaten into that grotesquely red-thatched face?

Maggot was fighting like a demon now to tear himself free. A sweat bead spurted out on Dave Henderson's forehead and rolled down his face. The white eyes came dancing nearer, nearer. They circled and circled, as he circled—Maggot was the shield. He whirled this way and that. The muscles of his arms cracked as they swung and whipped Maggot around in furious gyrations.

A shot rang out. Something sang with an angry hum and hot breath past Dave Henderson's cheek. The velvet voice laughed. Maggot screamed in a mixture of rage and fear.

"Curse youse, youse fool! Youse 'll hit me!"

"I'll get him next time, Maggot," purred the velvet voice.

The white eyes kept too far away—that was what was the matter—too far away. If they would only come near, near enough so that of a sudden he could let go his grip and launch this squirming human shield full, like a battering-ram, into those white eyes! That was the only chance there was. Only the Scorpion was too cunning for that—he kept too far away.

Dave Henderson swung madly around again, interposing Maggot's body as the Scorpion darted to one side; and then suddenly and for the first time there came a sound from Dave Henderson's lips—a low cry of pain. "*Teresa!*"



It was only a glimpse he got—perhaps it wasn't real! Just a glimpse into the hallway where the light from the room streamed out—just a glimpse of a figure on the stairs who leaned out over the banister, and whose face was white as death itself, and whose hands seemed to grip and cling to the banister rail as though they were welded there.

Teresa! He grew sick at heart as he struggled now. Teresa! If he could only have kept her out of this; if only, at least, she were not there to *see*! It couldn't last much longer!

True, Maggot, beyond doubt, beyond shadow of trickery now, had had his fill of fighting, and there was fear upon the man, the fear of an unlucky shot from the Scorpion, and he was whimpering now, and he struggled only apathetically; but it took strength to drag even a dead weight around and around, and that strength would not last forever. Teresa! She had heard those shots from up above—she had *seen* the Scorpion fire once, and miss, and she—

The Scorpion laughed out. It looked like a sure shot now! Dave Henderson jerked Maggot in front of him, but his swirling, mad gyrations had brought him into the angle that the desk made with the wall, and, turn as he would now, the Scorpion could reach in around the end of the desk and almost touch him with the revolver muzzle itself.

"I got him, Maggot!" purred the Scorpion. "I got him now, the—"

The man's voice ended in a startled cry.

The sweat was running into Dave Henderson's eyes, he could hardly see—just a blurred vision over Maggot's shoulder, a blurred vision of a slim figure running like the wind into the room, and stooping to the floor where the package of bank-notes lay, and snatching it up, and starting for the door again.

And then the Scorpion fired—but the revolver was pointed now across the room, and the slight, fleeing figure swayed, and staggered, and recovered herself, and went on, and over her shoulder her voice, though it faltered, rang bravely through the room:

"I—I thought he'd rather have this than

you, Dave. It was the only chance. Don't mind me, Dave. He won't get me."

The whimpering thing in Dave Henderson's arms was flung from him, and it crashed to the floor. It wasn't his own strength, it was the strength of one demented, and of a maddened brain, that possessed Dave Henderson now. And he leaped forward, running like a hare. Teresa had already gained the stairs—the Scorpion in pursuit was half-way along the hall.

And now he saw nothing else—just that red-haired figure running, running, running. There was neither house, nor hall, nor stairs, nor any other thing—only that red-haired figure that the soul of him craved, for whom there was no mercy, that with his hands he would tear to pieces in insensate fury.

A flash came blinding his eyes, a report roared in his ears—and then his hands snatched at and caught a wriggling thing. And for the first time he realized that he had reached the head of the stairs, realized it because, pitched forward over the landing, lay a woman's form that was still and motionless. And he laughed like the maniac he was now, and the wriggling thing screamed in his grasp, screamed as it went up above his head—and then Dave Henderson hurled it from him to the bottom of the stairs.

He turned and flung himself on his knees beside Teresa. He called her name again and again—and there was no answer. She lay there, half on her face on the floor, her arms wound around a torn package of bank-notes.

He rose, and rocked on his feet, and his clenched hands went up above his head. And then he laughed again, as though his reason were gone—laughed as his eyes fixed on a red-headed thing that made an unshapely heap at the foot of the stairs; and laughed at a slinking shadow that went along the hall and scurried out through the front door. That was Maggot—like a rat leaving a sinking ship.

Then reason came again. The police! At any moment now—the police. In an instant he had caught Teresa up in his arms. She wasn't dead—he could hear her

breathing—only it was weak, pitifully weak. There should be an exit to the fire-escape from this floor; but it was dark, and he had no time to search; it was quicker to go up the stairs, where he knew the way, and out through his own room.

Stumbling, staggering in the darkness, holding her in his arms, he made his way up-stairs. The police—his mind centered on that again. If she and he were caught here, his identification as Dave Henderson, which would ultimately ensue, would damn her; this money, wrapped so tenaciously in her arms, would damn her; and, on top of that old score of the police in San Francisco, there had been ugly work here in this house to-night. If it were not for the money, the criminal hoax played upon the police in the disappearance of Dave Henderson would not be so serious—but the money was here, and in that hoax she had had a part, and the shadow of Nicolo Capriano still lay across her shoulders.

The night air came gratefully cool upon his face. He drew it in in great, gasping breaths, greedily, hungrily. He had gained the fire-escape through the window now, and now he paused for the first time to listen. There was no sound. Back there inside the house it was as still as death. Well, why shouldn't it be? There *was* death there, and—

His arms tightened suddenly in a great, overwhelming paroxysm of fear around Teresa, and he bent his head, bent it lower, lower still, until his face was close to that white face he held, and through the darkness his eyes searched it in an agony of apprehension.

And then he started forward again, and began to descend the fire-escape, and now he groped uneasily for foothold as he went. It seemed rickety and unstable, this spidery thing that sprawled against the side of the wall, and it was dark, and without care the foot would slip through the openings between the treads. It had not seemed that way when he had gone up and down when disposing of the valises. Only now it was a priceless burden that he carried—this form that lay close-pressed against his breast, whose touch, alternately now, brought him a sickening sense of dread and

a surging hope that sent the blood leaping like a mill-race through his veins.

He went down, step after step, his mind and brain shrieking at him to hurry because there was not a single second to lose—but it was slow, maddeningly slow. He could not see the treads, not only because it was dark, but because Teresa's form was in his arms. He could only feel with his feet—and now and then his body swayed to preserve his balance.

Was there no end to the thing! It seemed like some bottomless pit of blackness into which he was descending. And it seemed as though this pit held an abominable significance in its blackness and its depth, as though it beckoned him on to engulf them, it seemed—it seemed—God, if she would only move, if she would not lie so still, so terribly still in his arms!

Another step, another, and then his foot, searching out, found only space beneath it. He must free one arm now, so that he could cling to the bottom tread and lower himself to the ground. It was only a short drop, he knew, for the lower section of the fire-escape was one of those that swung on hinges, and when, previously, coming up, Teresa had held it down for him, he had been able to reach it readily with a spring from the ground. But he dared not jump even that short distance now with Teresa, wounded, in his arms.

He changed her position now to throw her weight into the hollow of his left arm, lifting her head so that it lay high upon his shoulder—and with the movement her hair brushed his lips. It brought a sudden, choking sob from Dave Henderson, and in a great, yearning impulse, he let his head sink down until his cheek for an instant was laid against hers—and then, the muscles of his right arm straining until they cracked, he lowered himself down and dropped to the ground.

He ran now, lurching, across the yard, and out into the lane, and here he paused again to listen. But he heard nothing. He was clear of that cursed trap-house now—if he could only keep clear! He ran on again, stumbling again, with his burden. And now, though he did not pause to listen any more, it seemed as though his throb-



bing ear-drums caught the sounds at last that they had been straining to hear. Wasn't that the police behind there now—on the street in front of the Iron Tavern? It sounded like it—like the arrival of a police patrol.

He reached the shed where he had hidden the valises, entered, and laid Teresa tenderly on the floor. He used his flashlight then—and a low moan came from his lips. The bullet had cut across the side of her neck just above the shoulder; the wound was bleeding profusely, and over the package of bank-notes, around which her arms were still tightly clasped, there had spread a crimson stain. He drew her arms gently apart, laid the package on the floor, and then, wrenching one of the valises open, snatched at the first article of linen that came to hand.

His lips trembled as he tried to stanch the flow of blood and bind the wound.

"Teresa! Teresa!" Dave Henderson whispered.

Her eyes opened—and smiled. She made an effort to speak.

He bent his head to catch the words.

"Dave—where—where are we? Still in the house?"

"No!" he told her feverishly. "No! We're clear of that. We're in the shed here in the lane where I took the valises."

She made a slight affirmative movement of her head.

"Then go—go at once—Dave—for help I—"

Her eyes had closed again.

"Yes!" he said. His voice was choking. He called her name. "Teresa!" There was no answer. She had lapsed back into unconsciousness. And then the soul of him spoke its agony. "Oh, my God, Teresa!" he cried brokenly, and swayed to his feet.

An instant he stood there, then stooped, picked up the package of bank-notes, thrust it into the open valise, closed the valise, carried it into a darker corner of the shed, and went to the door.

He looked out. There was no one in sight in the darkness. But then, what interest would the police have in this section of the lane? There was nothing to connect it with the Iron Tavern.

He stepped outside, and broke into a run down the lane, heading for the intersecting street in the opposite direction from the Iron Tavern. He must get help. A queer, mirthless laugh was on his lips. A wounded woman in the lane was *the* connecting link with the Iron Tavern. And yet he must get help. Well, there was only one source from which he dared ask help—only one—Millman.

He ran on. Millman! Something within him rebelled at that. But Teresa was perhaps—was— No, he would not let his mind even frame the word. Only one thing was paramount now—she must have help at once. Well, God knew, he could *trust* Millman! Only there seemed some strange irony here that chastened him. And yet— Yes, this was strange, too! Suddenly he became strangely content that it should be Millman.

He reached the street and looked up and down. It was four o'clock in the morning, and the street was dark and deserted except for a single lighted window that shone out half-way down the block. He ran toward it. It proved to be an all-night restaurant, and he entered it, and asked for the telephone, and shut himself up in the booth.

A moment more and he had the St. Lucian Hotel on the wire.

"Give me Mr. Millman—Mr. Charles Millman," he requested hurriedly.

The hotel operator answered him. It was impossible. A guest could not be disturbed at that hour. It was against the rules, and—

Dave Henderson was pleading hoarsely into the phone.

"Give me Millman! Let me speak to him! It's life or death!"

"I—I can't." The operator's voice, a girl's, was hesitant, less assured.

"For God's sake, give me Millman—there's a life at stake!" Dave Henderson cried frantically. "Be quick! For God's sake, quick!"

"Wait!" she said.

It seemed a time interminable, and then a drowsy voice called:

"Hello! What's wanted?"

"Is that you, Millman?" Dave Hender-

son asked wildly. "Millman, is that you?"

"Yes," the voice answered.

"It's Dave speaking. Dave—do you understand? I—there's some one badly hurt. I can't tell you any more over the phone; but, in God's name, get a doctor 'hat you can trust and come!'"

"I'll come, Dave," said the voice quietly. "Where?"

Henderson turned from the telephone and thrust his head out of the booth. He had no idea where he was in New York, save that he was near the Iron Tavern. He dared not mention that. Before many hours the papers would be full of the Iron Tavern—and the telephone operator might hear.

"What's this address?" he called out to a man behind the counter.

The man told him.

Henderson repeated the address into the phone.

"All right, Dave," Millman's voice came quickly; "I'll be there as soon as I can get my car and pick up the doctor."

Henderson stepped out into the night and pulled off his hat. His forehead was dripping wet. He walked back to the lane, listened, heard nothing, and stole along it, and entered the shed again, and knelt by Teresa's side.

She was unconscious. He bent over her with the flash-light. His bandage was crude and clumsy; but it brought him a little measure of relief to see that at least it had been effective in the sense that the bleeding had been arrested. And then his eyes went to the white face again.

It seemed as though his mental faculties were blunted, that they were sensible only of a gnawing at his brain that was almost physical in its acute pain. Instinctively, from time to time, he looked at his watch.

At last he got up and went out into the lane again, and from there to the street. It was too soon. He could only pace up and down. It was too soon, but he could not have afforded to keep the doctor waiting when Millman arrived. It would be daylight before they came, wouldn't it? It was an hour now—a thousand years, wasn't it?—since he had telephoned.

A big touring-car rolled down the street. He ran toward it. Millman—yes, it was he. The car stopped.

"Quick!" he urged, and sprang on the footboard. "Go to the corner of the lane there!"

And then, as the car stopped again, and Millman, from the wheel, and a man with a little black bag in his hand, sprang out, Henderson led the way down the lane, running without a word, and pushed open the door of the shed. He held the flash-light steadily for the doctor, though he turned now to Millman.

"You've got a right to know," he said in an undertone, as the doctor bent absorbed over Teresa. "Hell's broken loose to-night, Millman—there's been murder farther up the lane there in a place they call the Iron Tavern. Do you understand? That's why I didn't dare go anywhere for help. Listen! I'll tell you." And, speaking rapidly, he sketched the details of the night. "Do you understand, Millman?" he said at the end. "Do you understand why I didn't dare go anywhere for help?"

His friend did not answer. He was looking questioningly at the doctor as the latter suddenly rose.

"We must get her to the hospital at once," said the doctor crisply.

"The hospital!" Dave Henderson echoed the word. It seemed to jeer at him. He could have summoned an ambulance himself! As well throw the cards upon the table! His eyes involuntarily sought that darker corner of the shed where the package of bank-notes, blood-stained now, was hidden in the valise. The hospital, or the police station—in that respect, for Teresa as well as himself, it was all the same!

It was Millman who spoke.

"Wait!" he said, and touched Henderson's arm; then turned to the doctor. "Can we move her in my car?" he asked.

"Yes; I guess we can manage it," the doctor answered.

Millman drew the doctor a little to one side. He whispered earnestly. Henderson caught a phrase about "getting a nurse"—and then he felt Millman's hand press his arm again.



"It's all right, Dave. I guess I'll open that town house, after all, this summer, to a select few." His hand tightened eloquently in its pressure. "We'll take her there, Dave!"

## CHAPTER X.

### GOD'S CHANCE.

**I**T was a big house—like some vast, cavernous, deserted place. Footsteps, when there were footsteps, and voices, when there were voices, seemed to echo with strange loneliness through the great halls and up and down the wide staircases. And in the dawn, as the light came gray, the pieces of furniture, swathed in their summer coverings of sheets, had seemed like weird specters inhabiting the place.

But the dawn had come hours ago.

Henderson raised his head from his cupped hands. Was that the nurse now, or the doctor—that footstep up above? He listened a moment, and then his chin dropped back into his hands.

Black hours they had been—black hours for his soul—and hours full of the torment and agony of fear for Teresa.

From somewhere, almost coincident with their arrival at the house, a nurse had come. From some restaurant a man had brought breakfast for the doctor, for the nurse, for Millman—and for him. He had eaten something—what, he did not know. The doctor had gone, and come again—the doctor was up-stairs there now. Perhaps, when the doctor came down again, he would allow him to see Teresa. Half an hour ago they had told him that she would get well.

There was strange chaos in his mind. That agony of fear for her—that cold, icy thing that had held a clutch upon his heart—was gone; but in its place had come another agony, an agony of yearning, and now he was afraid for himself.

Millman had tried to make him go to bed and sleep. Sleep! He could not have slept! He could not even have remained still for five minutes at a stretch. He had been half mad with his anxiety for Teresa. He had wanted to be somewhere where his

restless movements would not reach Teresa in her room, and yet somewhere where he could intercept every coming and going of the doctor.

And so for hours he had alternately paced up and down this lower hall here, and thrown himself upon this great, wide, sheet-covered divan where he sat now. And in those hours his mind, it seemed, had run the gamut of every emotion a human soul could know. It ached now, physically. His temples throbbed and hurt.

His eyes strayed around the hall, and held on a large, sheet-draped piece of furniture over beyond the foot of the staircase. They had served other purposes, these coverings, than to make spectral illusions in the gray of dawn. Beneath that sheet lay the package of bank-notes. It made a good hiding-place. He had extracted the package from the valise, and had secreted it there during the confusion as they had entered the house. But it seemed to take form through that sheet now as it had done a score of times since he had put it there, and always it seemed as though a crimson stain that was on the wrapper would spread and spread until it covered the entire package.

That package—and the crimson stain! It seemed to make of itself a curiously appropriate foreground for a picture that spread away into a vista of limitless years: an orphan school, with its cracked walls, and the painted mottoes whose scrolls gaped where the cracks were; a swirl of horses reaching madly down the stretch, a roar of hoarse, delirious shouts, elated oaths around the bookmaker's paying-stand, pinched faces on the outer fringes of this ring; a thirst intolerable, stark pain, the brutal jolting of a box car through the nights, hours upon hours of a horror that ended only with the loss of consciousness; walls that reared themselves so high that they seemed to stand sentinels against the invasion of even a ray of sunlight, steel bars, and doors, and bolts that clanged and clanged until the sound ate like some cancerous thing into the soul itself; and then wolves, human wolves, ravenous wolves, between two packs of them, the police on the one hand, the underworld on the other,

that snarled and tore at him while he fought them for his life.

All that! That was the price he had paid for that package there—that, and that crimson stain.

He swept his hand across his eyes. His face grew set, and his jaws locked hard together. No, he wasn't sure yet that even that was all—that the package there was even yet finally and irrevocably *his*—to do with as he liked. There was last night—the Iron Tavern—the police again. Was there a connecting link trailing behind him? What had become of the Scorpion? What story had the man perhaps told? Were the police looking for an unknown man—who was Dave Henderson—and looking for an unknown woman—who was Teresa?

Well, before long now, surely, he would know—when Millman got back. Millman, who had intimated that he had an inside pull somewhere that would get the straight-police version of the affair, had gone out immediately after breakfast for that purpose.

That was what counted, the only thing that counted—to know where the police stood. Millman ought to be back now. He had been gone for hours. It was taking him an unaccountably long time!

He had called Millman a straight crook. He had tried to call him something else this morning—for what he had done for Teresa and himself last night. Only he wasn't any good at words. But Millman had seemed to understand, though Millman had not said much, either; just a smile in the gray eyes, and a long, steady clasp of both hands.

There was a footstep on the stairs now. He looked up. It was the doctor coming down. He jumped to his feet and went eagerly to the foot of the stairs.

"Better!" said the doctor cheerily.

"I—I want to see her," said Dave Henderson.

The doctor smiled as he moved across the hall toward the front door.

"In a few minutes," he said. "I've told the nurse to let you know when she's ready."

The doctor went out, and he heard him descend the outer steps and then pause, and then another footstep ascending; and

then he caught the sound of voices; and then, after a little while, the front door opened and Millman came into the reception-hall.

Henderson's lips tightened as he stepped toward the other.

"What"—he found his voice curiously hoarse, and he cleared his throat—"what did you find out?"

Millman motioned toward the divan.

"Everything, I guess, Dave," he answered as he sat down.

"And?" Dave Henderson flung himself down beside the other.

Millman shook his head.

"Better hear the whole story, Dave. You can size it up then for yourself."

Dave nodded.

"Go on, then," he said.

"I told you," said Millman, "that I thought I could get inside information—the way the police look at it. Well, I have. And I have got it from a source that is absolutely dependable. Understand, Dave?"

Henderson nodded again.

"The police start with that telephone message," said Millman. "They believe that it was authentic, and that it was Dago George who sent it. In fact, without it they wouldn't have known where to turn; while with it the whole affair appears to be simplicity itself."

He smiled a little whimsically.

"They used it as the key to unlock the door. It's no discredit to their astuteness. With nothing to refute it, it is not only the obvious, but the logical solution. Booky builded a great deal better than he knew—for Dave Henderson—when he used that telephone for his own dirty ends. It wouldn't have been so easy for the police to account for the death of three men in the Iron—"

"Three!" Henderson strained suddenly forward. Three! There were two—only two—Dago George and Booky Skarvan. Only two dead—and a red-headed thing huddled at the foot of the stairs. Was that it? Was that the third one—Cunny the Scorpion? Had it ended with that? Had he *killed* a man? Last night he would have torn the fellow limb from limb—yes, and under the same circumstances he would do it again—Teresa up-stairs, who had been



so close to death, justified that a thousand times over. But— "You mean Cunny the Scorpion—Cunny Smeeks?" he demanded tensely.

"Yes," said Millman. And then, with a quick, comprehensive glance at Henderson's face: "But you didn't do it, Dave."

Dave's hands were clenched between his knees. They relaxed slowly.

"I'm glad of that," he said in a low tone. "Go on, Millman."

"The man had evidently revived just before the police got there. He was shot and killed instantly by the police while trying to escape. He had bruises on his head which the police attributed to a fight with Dago George. Dago George, the police assume, woke up to discover the men breaking into his room.

"They attacked him. He managed to shoot Booky Skarvan, and grappled with Cunny the Scorpion—the Scorpion's clothing, somewhat torn, and the Scorpion's bruises, bear this out.

"But in order to account for the time it would have taken to crack the safe, the police believe that the Scorpion at this time only knocked Dago George out temporarily. Then later, while the Scorpion worked at the safe, Dago George recovered sufficiently to rush and snatch at the phone and shout his appeal for help into it; and then the Scorpion laid Dago George's head open with the blow that killed him, using one of the burglar's tools as the weapon.

"And then the Scorpion, staying to put the finishing touches on his work to get the safe open, and overestimating the time it would take the police to get there, was finally unable to make his escape."

"My God!" muttered Henderson under his breath.

"That's not all," said Millman, with a faint smile. "There was known enmity between Dago George and the Scorpion. The Scorpion had come to the Iron Tavern earlier in the evening, one of the waiters testified, and had brought the fat man with him. The fat man was given a room by Dago George. The waiter identified the fat man, an obvious accomplice therefore of the Scorpion, as the man who was shot. It dovetailed irrefutably—even the Scor-

pion's prior intentions of harm to Dago George being established.

"There was some money in the safe, quite a little, but the police are more inclined to attribute the motive to the settling of a gang feud, with the breaking of the safe more or less as a blind."

Henderson was staring across the hall. His lips were tight.

"That waiter!" he exclaimed abruptly. "Didn't the waiter say anything about anybody else who got rooms there last night?"

"I am coming to that," Millman replied.

"The police questioned the man, of course. He said that last night, at separate times, a man and a woman came there, presumably to get rooms, since they had valises with them, and that they saw Dago George.

"He did not know whether Dago George had accommodated them or not. He thought not, both because he had neither carried nor seen the valises taken up-stairs, and because Dago George invariably refused to give any rooms to strangers.

"Lots of people came there, imagining the Iron Tavern to be a hotel where they could get cheap accommodations, and were always turned away. Dago George had gone out of that end of the business. The waiter inclined to the belief that the man and woman in question had met the same fate; certainly, he had seen or heard nothing of them since."

Millman shrugged his shoulders.

"The police searched the rooms up-stairs, found no trace of occupancy except the hand-bag of the fat man, identified again by the waiter—and agreed with the waiter."

"There was Maggot." Dave Henderson seemed to be speaking almost to himself. "But Maggot was only a tool. All Maggot knew was that he was to get the safe open—for some money. I guess Maggot, when he finds out that the police don't know anything about him, will think he's lucky. I guess if there's any man in the world who'll keep his mouth shut for the sake of his own hide, it's Maggot. Maggot isn't going to run his head into a noose." He turned sharply to Millman.

"But there's still some one else—the doctor."

"We have been friends, intimate friends, all our lives," said Millman simply. "I have given him my word of honor that you had no hand in the death of any one of those three men, and that is sufficient."

And then Henderson laughed a little—a queer, strange, mirthless laugh—and stood up from the divan.

"Then I'm clear, Millman?" he shot out.

"Yes," said Millman slowly, "as far as I can see, Dave, you're clear."

"And free?" There was fierce assertiveness, rather than interrogation, in Dave Henderson's voice. "It's taken five years, but I've got that money now. I guess I've paid for it; and I guess there's no one now to put a crimp in it any more—not even Booky Skarvan—providing that little proposition of yours, that month, still stands."

Millman's face and Millman's eyes sobered.

"It stands, Dave," he said gravely.

"In a month," said Dave Henderson, "even a fool could get far enough away to cover his trail—couldn't he? Well, then, there's only Teresa left. She's something like you, Millman. She's for sending that money back, but she's sort of put out of the running—for about a month, too!"

Millman made no answer.

"Five years," said Dave Henderson, with a hard smile. "Well, it's *mine* now! Those years were a hell—a hell—do you understand? But they would only be a little hell compared with the hell to-day if I couldn't get away with that package now without, say, a policeman standing there in the doorway waiting for me."

"Dave," said Millman sharply, "what do you mean? What are you going to do?"

There was some one on the stairs again—some one all in white. Henderson stared. The figure was beckoning to him. Yes, of course, it was the nurse.

"Dave," Millman repeated, "what are you going to do?"

Henderson laughed again—queerly.

"I'm going up-stairs—to see Teresa," he said.

"And then?" Millman asked.

But Henderson scarcely heard him. He was walking now toward the stairs. The nurse's voice reached him.

"Just a few minutes," warned the nurse. "And she must not be excited."

He gained the landing, and looked back over the balustrade down into the great hall below. Millman had come to the foot of the staircase, and was leaning on the newel-post. And Henderson looked more closely. Millman's gray eyes were blurred, and, though they smiled, the smile came through a mist that had gathered in them. And then his voice came softly.

"I get you, as we used to say 'out there,'" said Millman. "I get you, Dave. Thank God! It's two straight crooks, isn't it, Dave—two of us?"

Millman's face was blotted out—there was another face that Henderson saw now through an open doorway, a face that lay upon the pillows, and that was very white. It must be the great, truant masses of black hair, which crowned the face, that made it look as white as that. And they said she was getting better! They must have lied to him—the face was so white.

He didn't see the face any more now, because he was kneeling down beside the bed, and because his own face was buried in the counterpane.

And then the great shoulders of the man shook.

His life! That was what she had bought—and that was what she had paid for almost with her own. That was why she lay here, and that was why her face was so white.

Teresa! This was Teresa here.

He raised his head at last. Her dark eyes were fixed on him, and they smiled.

She was holding out her hand.

"Dave," she said brightly, "the nurse told me she was going to let you see me for a few minutes—to cheer me up. And here I've been waiting—oh, ever so long. And you haven't spoken a word. Haven't you anything to say?"—she was smiling teasingly with her lips now—"Dave?"

"Yes," he said. "Yes"—his voice choked—"more than I can ever say. Last night, Teresa, if it had not been for you, I—"



"Don't you know that we are not to talk about that, Dave—ever," she said quickly. "If I did anything then, oh, I am so glad. You're not to say another word."

"But I *must*," he said hoarsely. "Do you think I—"

"Dave, I'll call the nurse!" she said in a low voice. "You'll make me cry."

It was true. The dark eyes were swimming, full of tears. She hid them now suddenly with their long lashes.

"There's something else, then, Teresa," he said at last. "I'm going to give that money back."

There was no answer—only he felt her hand touch his head, and her fingers play gently through his hair.

"I knew it," she told him.

"But do you know why?" he asked.

Again there was no answer.

"I remember what I said last night—that I couldn't buy you that way. And—I'm not trying to now. It's going back because I haven't any choice. A man can't take his life from a woman's hand, and from the hand of a friend take the life of the woman who has saved him—and throw them both down—and play the cur. I haven't any choice." His voice broke suddenly. "It's going back, Teresa, whether it means you or not. Do you understand? It's going back—either way."

"Yes," she said.

Henderson raised his bowed head. The dark eyes were closed.

"That—that puts it straight, then, Teresa," he said. "That lets me say what I want to say now. I've done a lot of thinking in the last few hours when I thought that perhaps you weren't—weren't going to get better. I thought about what you said last night—about God giving one another chance if one wanted to take it. Teresa, would you believe me if I told you that I was going to take that chance—from now on?"

The dark eyes opened now.

"I don't think God ever meant that you would do anything else, Dave," she said. "If He had, you would never have been caught and put in prison, and been through everything else that has happened to you,

because it's just those things, Dave, that have made you say what you have just said. If you had succeeded in getting away with that money five years ago, you would have been living as a thief to-day, and—and you would have stolen more, perhaps, and—and at last you wouldn't even have been a man." She turned her face away on the pillow, and fumbled for his hand. "But it isn't just you, Dave. I didn't say that last night. I said God offered us both a chance. It's not only you, Dave—both of us are going to take that chance."

"Together, Teresa?"

Her hand closed in a tighter clasp on his.

"Teresa!" He was bending over her now, smoothing back the hair from her forehead. The blood pounded in a mighty tide through his veins. "Teresa!"

"It's wonderful! God's chance, Dave—together—from now on."

Into his face came a great new light. Self-questioning and self-debate were gone. Teresa *trusted* him. He knew himself before God and his fellows henceforth an honest man. And he was rich—rich with a boundless, priceless love that would endure while life endured. Teresa! His lips pressed the white forehead, and the closed eyelids, and then her lips were warm upon his own—and then he was kneeling again, but now his arms were around her, folding her to him, and his head lay upon the pillow, and his cheek touched hers.

And presently Millman, coming up the stairs, paused abruptly on the landing, as, through the open doorway of the room that was just in front of him, his eyes fell upon Dave Henderson's kneeling figure. And he stood there. And Teresa's voice, very low, and as though she was repeating something, reached him.

And creeping into Millman's gray eyes there came a light of understanding as tender as a woman's, and for a moment more he lingered there, and then he tiptoed softly away. And the words that he had heard seemed to have graven themselves deep into the great heart of the man, for, as he went slowly on down the hall, he said them over and over again to himself:

"From now on—from now on!"

(The end.)

# Heart to Heart Talks



By the Editor



**I**f cities are not the fine flower of civilization, they are at least its "hybrid perpetuals." They have doubtless been a factor of prime importance in the evolution of art and industry, but at the same time they have been the fertile progenitors of much crime and no little misery. Poverty finds in every city a local habitation and a home, and the proud, free spirit of man, that needs the vitalizing breadth of the plains and the uplift of the hills to keep its eye clear and its brain clean, falls easily into the slough of city greed and competition. The assault of the city on the human citadel leaves most men before forty with a broken spirit and a mechanical task. More and more we are coming to see that man was made to labor and to play in the great out of doors, and the artificiality of city life is largely responsible for most of the pressing problems of these momentous times. All the problems that continually fret the souls of city dwellers are problems which, at least in their complications, have been made by the artificial economy of the city. Every force that tends to direct attention back to the land is a constructive agent in the promotion of happiness and efficiency. We are quite sure that the authors of our new serial—

## THE RED GLORY

BY ETHEL AND JAMES DORRANCE

Authors of "The Law's Outlaw," "Who Knows?" "The Whitewashed Wall," etc.

had no purpose in view in the writing of this beautiful story of Arizona other than to give their readers and ours the finest fruit of their loom. But we make bold to think you will prize this story, not primarily for the deep dramatic and emotional appeal which it makes, but for the unsuspected allure which it holds for every man and woman who would shake the dust of the city from their feet, and hasten again into the red glory of the West, where men are judged, not by the cut of their clothes or the color of their limousine, but by the goodness of their hearts and the labor of their hands.

Bear in mind, "THE RED GLORY" opens in next week's magazine, and you must make the acquaintance of Gloriana Frazer from the very start, if you expect to enjoy the full flavor of this glowing Western story.

**"H**ERE is a story to read on wild nights, when the open fire is roaring up the chimney, the wind is howling around the house, and the rain beating on the window-panes," wrote the author when he sent us the novelette that will appear in next week's ALL-STORY WEEKLY—

## THE LIVING PORTRAIT

BY TOD ROBBINS

Author of "Who Wants a Green Bottle?" "Safe and Sane," "The Terrible Three," etc.

Mr. Robbins was right. It's a tale that will make delightful shivers run up and down your

spine and make your back hair bristle. It's a tale of horror—of murder—a wonderfully clever and realistic study of the mind of a madman. Who killed Paul Grey? That's the mystery. The man who was accused of the crime said it was committed by—

But that's the story. We won't give it away.

Mr. Robbins is an artist of high rank, and we are sure that this story will take its place among the great mystery and horror stories of literature. It has everything that a great story of its kind should have—the atmosphere of terror, the deep gloom of crime, the psychology of insanity. These are dangerous materials with which to work.



Handled without the deft touch of the real artist, they spell failure. But in the hands of a writer who knows his art, they make a story that leaves a deep and lasting impression. Such a story is "THE LIVING PORTRAIT."

GEORGE ALLAN ENGLAND's story in next week's magazine, "SHALL—OR SHALL NOT," is a pointed instance of the folly of long fingers, and the swift retribution that follows the longer hand of detection. Here is a compact, swift-moving little story, in which a fortune was lost—almost—by the hook of a stenographic curve. Eric Winton accepted the legal document his lawyer had handed him as final, and the thing, to all intents and purposes, was a closed instance of disappointed expectations. But Mrs. Eric had been a stenographer and— But this is the story, which you will find as interesting as it is clever.

WHEN a writer tells tales of the big woods, he must know what he is talking about. A little slip and a dozen knights of the paddle and the pack-basket give vent to howls of unholy joy, and leap upon the prostrate form of the offending tenderfoot, holding him up to the scorn of the other woodsmen readers of the magazine in which the slip appears. But Raymond S. Spears—author of "SNOW HUNTERS" in next week's ALL-STORY WEEKLY—has no fears; he knows whereof he writes. Most city dwellers must get their delight in the winter woods from the pages of books and magazines, and to them Mr. Spears's

story will come as a welcome breath from God's big, clean out-doors.

WE were willing to risk the price of liquid refreshment next July that if you fail to approve Raymond Lester's story, "COLLEEN RHUE," in next week's magazine, the failure cannot be shared by either the story or the author. Here is an exceptionally tense tale, written with consummate distinction, by a writer who has a powerful command of human psychology, and an equally good grip on the crooked ways of the rascal who always plays safe, "within the law." How a pair of rogues, who watched their own step, but failed to note the step of their victim, were brought to an accounting, forms the theme of this intense "close-up" of contemporary roguery. Read it, and if you fail to concur—"listen, Lester"—we haven't got your number and—"everything."

MOST of our readers have a soft spot in their hearts for Wuggles, P. H. D., and have followed his rise in life with more than a little interest. They will be glad to know that this interesting young man will make another appearance in next week's ALL-STORY WEEKLY. He is still climbing the ladder of success, and in "WUGGLES AND TIMMY TODD" Freeman Putney, Jr., tells of one of his ventures in small-town business. Naturally Wuggles gets what he goes after—that's one of his characteristics. This is a story that you will like.

### WHAT A GREAT AMERICAN EDITOR THINKS OF THE ALL-STORY

S. S. McClure, while studying the issues of government at Paris, finds time to regale himself with the world's best fiction—published in this magazine.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE ALL-STORY WEEKLY:

I have just returned from France, where I spent nearly two months observing men and affairs at the Peace Conference. After spending the days on the current problems, I longed for the ALL-STORY WEEKLY, and I was able to buy it. It cost me thirty cents a copy, and I would have bought it if it had cost fifty cents a copy.

I was glad to see that the ALL-STORY WEEKLY was credited with publishing such a large percentage of the best short stories of the year.

I often say to people that many of the authors who will be famous in the coming years are to be found in the ALL-STORY WEEKLY, which does not spend as much money on the cost of paper as it does in good judgment in selecting its contents.

Faithfully yours,

S. S. McCLURE.

New York, February 18, 1919.

### A REAL BENEFIT TO READERS

TO THE EDITOR:

First, I'm not writing this for publication; in fact, I'm not particularly inclined to publicity—personally. However, if you would like to use

this in your Heart to Heart Talks or your Log-Book, you can if you wish, under conditions that you use this first paragraph in full.

I just want to say (or write) a few words of appreciation for your magazines, the ALL-STORY WEEKLY and *The Argosy*. I've read quite a num-

ber—yes, really a large number—of the stories published in them. Naturally, you can hear remarks from different people as to the quality of literature we should read, especially short stories. I just want to say: I'd like to see the "guy" that can ridicule the stories contained in these magazines. The stories are really a true benefit to any one who reads them. Of course we all differ in our opinions of stories and everything else; we cannot judge as to what is best, but we all can speak as to what we like the best.

Naturally, there are stories in your magazines that don't appeal to me at all, yet there are others that strike my fancy, and I enjoy reading them. You have a large number of contributors (authors) to your magazines, and my favorite is Perley Poore Sheehan; that name is a satisfactory guarantee of a good story. Also E. J. Rath is very good. Who were the authors of "Who Am I?" and "A Perfect Forty-Six"? They were surely fine.

Am now reading "If You Believe It, It's So," by Perley Poore Sheehan, and it certainly is fine. Practically all of your novelettes suit me pretty well. Had a little "taste" of Vanardy's writing. I like him pretty well, too. Yours, for good luck in the future, as I place my card on P. P. S.

Blytheville, Arkansas.

ADAIR LAVANE.

NOTE: "Who Am I?" by Max Brand, ALL-STORY WEEKLY, February 23 to March 30, 1918; "A Perfect Forty-Six," by Verne Hardin Porter and Frank R. Adams, ALL-STORY WEEKLY, January 26 to February 9, 1918.

## STORIES OF ALL TYPES

TO THE EDITOR:

I have been a reader of the ALL-STORY WEEKLY for about two years now, and as I like the magazine very much, I am writing to tell you my favorite stories. "Gate of St. Anthony" was a wonderful historical romance. "Lady of the Night Wind," "Sword-Flame," "Palos of the Dog Star Pack," "Draft of Eternity," "Everyman's Land," "Chase of the Linda Belle," and "Janie Frete, Intruder" were all literary gems. Of recent serials I have preferred "H. R. H., the Rider," "Twenty-Six Clues," and "Broadway Bab." Many of your novelettes have been fine, but the best ones I can think of now are "The Blood Pearl," "A Rendezvous with Death," and "His Grace." Although my letter is already long, I would like to mention a few of my favorite short stories, as they seem rarely mentioned by your readers. "Sir Galahad," "Things That Are Caesar's," "Warned," "By Divine Right," "Out of Egypt," "The Assassin," and "Oh, Aladdin" were my favorites.

Your magazine is especially interesting and instructive, because it prints stories of all types and about all inhabited parts of the earth. By the number of my favorite stories you can easily see that I have passed many pleasant hours reading

my favorite magazine, the ALL-STORY WEEKLY. Wishing the ALL-STORY WEEKLY the success and long life it merits, I remain,

MRS. MARY HELMICK.

Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania.

## FROM A HOSPITAL IN FRANCE

TO THE EDITOR:

It will not be surprising to you to receive a letter from France, for I have read several under the heading, "Heart to Heart Talks." I am in a base hospital for the past two months, suffering with influenza and rheumatism. Right above my bed there is a shelf just piled up with magazines. Not surprising at all to find half of these to be ALL-STORY WEEKLYS. I have read all of them since I entered the hospital. The first thing I read is Heart to Heart Talks. Most of the folks that write you are subscribers. I am sorry to say that I am not. However, I will be right on the job when I return to America. The ALL-STORY WEEKLY is a very classy magazine, and I look for it wherever I go. Let me say that the ALL-STORY WEEKLY is very much in circulation, and I believe more so than any other magazine. I have no particular author. I read all the stories. I wouldn't mind, however, if some soldier-author would give us a war story. One would think that we soldiers over here would have enough of war without reading about it, but you will find the majority of us in favor of a story of the war. With my kindest regards and wishes for continued success, believe me to be,

SERGEANT JACK P. SMITH.

A. E. F., France.

## E. J. RATH A "DANDY"

TO THE EDITOR:

Just a few lines to let you know we appreciate your valuable magazine. As I never see any letters from this part of the State in Heart to Heart Talks, I thought I would write one; but I know there are plenty of readers, because if you don't keep your ALL-STORY WEEKLY and *Argosy* ordered, you get left. I should like to see some stories from Mildred Van Inwegen soon. E. J. Rath certainly is a dandy. Tell him to write some more. They are sure to give one the laughs. Johnston McCulley's "Broadway Bab" was certainly good. Hulbert Footner and the Dorrances are fine writers. In fact all the stories are good, from the serials to the short stories.

The stories I enjoyed were "The Pit-Diggers," "Face Value," "Too Many Crooks," "The Huntress," "Suspense," "The Reckless Age," "A Good Indian," "The Substitute Millionaire," "His Temporary Wife," "The Border Legion," "The Texan," "Ready to Occupy," "The Joyous Trouble-Maker," "Thirst," "Leah," "The Voice in the Wall." There are seven to our family who read the ALL-STORY WEEKLY, even the youngest, ten years old, has just started with



E. K. Means and Frank Condon. We have taken it for a number of years. I guess I shall close now with best wishes and success to the ALL-STORY WEEKLY.

ELLEN O'DONNELL.

Merchantville, New Jersey.

## FROM THE HOME OF MARK TWAIN

TO THE EDITOR:

Our whole family have been reading the ALL-STORY WEEKLY for about five years. We have now added *The Argosy* to our list of magazines, and enjoy reading the two mentioned above more than any of the others.

I will mention a few of our favorite authors: Jackson Gregory, Edgar Rice Burroughs, James B. Hendryx, Max Brand, Raymond S. Spears, J. U. Giesy and Junius B. Smith.

My father says the best story he ever read was "Sand." That story introduced us to the ALL-STORY WEEKLY, and since that we have not missed a copy.

We would like to have sequels to "The Texan" and "The Untamed." We are also hoping for more stories about *Tarzan*.

Our family has had the pleasure of seeing Edgar Rice Burroughs and his family in our own home town. He had to pass our residence when he visited the famous Mark Twain Cave, which is a mile below Hannibal.

We would like to know all of our writers. Why not put their photos in the ALL-STORY WEEKLY so the readers may become acquainted with them, just as the movie fans are familiar with the looks of their favorites?

We thank you and the authors for the *Janie Frete* stories and for the sequel to "The Moon Pool," which has just begun.

Awaiting the fulfilment of our requests, and innumerable good things for which we have not asked, but know you have planned for all of your readers, we are,

Yours cordially,

R. F. D. No. 3,  
Hannibal, Missouri.

GRACE MARTZ.

## PETER GROSS A FAVORITE

TO THE EDITOR:

I do not exactly know when my subscription runs out, and do not wish to miss any of the excellent stories which my wife and I are reading at the present date. Enclosed you will find one dollar, for which please continue my subscription until it will be more convenient for me to send the four dollars for the year.

We have no bookstands here, and I get more comfort in reading the ALL-STORY WEEKLY than anything I know of, and find I cannot get along without it. We look forward each week to the coming of the ALL-STORY WEEKLY as we would the visit of an old friend. I have just finished reading *Whistling Dan*, in "The Untamed"; but I think when the geese go north in the spring

again, Max Brand might give us a sequel, as I am sure he could. I am also waiting for a sequel to "Koyala the Beautiful." The *Peter Gross* stories are great; in fact they are one of my favorites.

When is *Dr. Goodwin* coming back? I hope nothing has happened to him, for we sure want that sequel to "The Moon Pool." "Stars of Evil" will be great, as all of the *Semi-Dual* stories are. Some of my favorite writers are: England, Williams, Sheehan, Jackson Gregory, and Hendryx; Captain Dingle is best of all; let him come again soon, and also McCulley with another like "Broadway Bab," for a good laugh. I always boost the ALL-STORY WEEKLY, and will try to continue my subscription yearly. If Frank G. Hammond has not received the September 28 issue and will write me, I will be able to help him out, as I have it, and do not care for the perfectly good quarter, either; but I do want him to have the book, and I know how interested he must be. This is my first letter, and I must say for the ALL-STORY WEEKLY—long may she live. Wishing you all the success in the world,

Camanche, California.

FRED H. FOSTER.

## LITTLE HEART-BEATS

Find enclosed money order for one dollar for the ALL-STORY WEEKLY for three months, beginning January 27. I have been a reader of your magazine for quite a number of years; in fact I have read it ever since I have learned to read. This is the first time I have subscribed for the ALL-STORY WEEKLY, as I have always bought it at the book-store. But it is too uncertain to buy that way, as I sometimes miss a part of a story. "The Texan," "The Untamed," "His Grace," and "The Wicked Streak," I think, were all fine. I read "The Favorite" from cover to cover, and it is hard to have a favorite author as they are all good. Well, here's hoping the ALL-STORY WEEKLY luck.

EDWARD D. TALBOT.

Worley, Idaho.

Enclosed find money order for four dollars to pay my subscription for one year to the ALL-STORY WEEKLY. Please begin with the January 18 number. I have been a reader of the ALL-STORY WEEKLY for some time. Have been depending on news-stands to supply me, but I am tired of having to run a race to get my magazine, and that is what you have to do to get it here. It reminds one of a bunch of bargain-hunting women at a remnant sale. I was not there on time, and did not get my January 18 number, so please begin my subscription there, as I do not wish to break the chain of "The Crimson Alibi" and "The Wicked Streak." They are both "corkers." "The Untamed," by Max Brand, was one of the best yet. Brand sure knows something about Western life, too. You see, I am a Westerner myself, and enjoy reading stories about my own part of the world. What has become of our



old friend, E. K. Means? Is he asleep? If so, wake him up. He surely don't think we appreciate him. You see, he also "gets close to whar I resides" when he writes. Well, I suppose they can't all write about my "neck of the woods"; if they did I would not know about the outside world. Patiently awaiting my copy, I remain,  
Wynona, Oklahoma. J. D. LYNCH.

I have been a reader of the ALL-STORY WEEKLY for years, always buying it from the news-dealers, and I do believe I would be entirely lost if I should miss a copy. I like all the stories and writers, but my especial favorites are E. R. Burroughs and the *Semi-Dual* stories. Enclosed you will find three dollars, for which please send me the ALL-STORY WEEKLY for six months, and send it for three months to my brother, W. C. Wood, Dallas, Texas. I am sure my brother will continue to take it when his time expires. Wishing you all the success in the world, I beg to remain, a pleased ALL-STORY WEEKLY reader,

MRS. W. A. OWNBY.

Los Angeles, California.

I have been buying your magazine for some years—six or more—but I have never written to you, though I have often wished to do so. I used to buy several other magazines, but when Hooverizing began, I left off the others. I just simply could not give up my ALL-STORY WEEKLY, nor shall I, so long as I can beg, borrow, or even steal the necessary ten cents. There have never been many stories which I did not like; but I simply had to lay aside two—"The Planeteer" and "Safe and Sane"—though in desperation one rainy day, when I could not find anything else, I did manage to wade through the latter, but—never again.

I liked the *Tarzan* stories, all of the Western stories, and I simply adore *Pincher*. I think "The Late Figger Bush" was by far the finest of E. K. Means's, where all are fine. I am glad they removed that chesty policeman, or did the "flu" get him? I never cared for him, nor for the Frank Condon tales.

"Everyman's Land" was beautiful; some of the

stories of the sea are fine, and your stories of the good "U. S. S. Springfield" cannot be beaten. More of them please. However, there is no magazine to equal the ALL-STORY WEEKLY in the opinion of

M. M. GREENE.

No. Edgecombe, Maine.

Enclosed you will find a money order for one dollar. Please send me the ALL-STORY WEEKLY for February 22, 1919, till the dollar is consumed. Then, if I am settled, I will subscribe for the year. And I want to say here and now, this being the first time I was ever interested enough to say anything about it, that you now have another lover of the ALL-STORY WEEKLY. I was down sick with the flu, and found an old magazine. I had never read it before, for I didn't think I would like it; but I can see very readily why it is called the ALL-STORY WEEKLY, for every one of them are *all stories*. Nobody can please everybody, but you can come as near as any one else, and I have read nearly every magazine. So all I can say is, keep up the good work. Thanking you in advance for all the amusement I will get out of them,

SAM HENIGAN.

Highgrove, California.

I have read all the instalments of "The Untamed," and think them fine, as I know something of that life by having the experience. I have traveled all over the West. That story, "The Untamed," was just bursting with excitement and pep. After having read the first instalment, it seemed ages until the next one came out. Some story, believe me.

C. H. EGLESTON.

Youngstown, Ohio.

You will find enclosed check for two dollars, for which send me the ALL-STORY WEEKLY for six months. I have been reading the ALL-STORY WEEKLY and *The Argosy* for several years, and like them both. I do not have time to read many of the serials, but I enjoy the novelettes and short stories, and think them the best magazines published. Yours, for prosperity,

MISS ANNETTE COLLINS.

Panama City, Florida.

## THIS BOOK APPEARED SERIALLY IN THE ALL-STORY WEEKLY

NOVEL  
NUMBER 87

THE UNTAMED  
BY MAX BRAND

Author of "Above the Law," "Who Am I?" "Fate's Honeymoon," etc.

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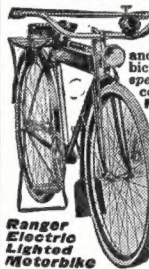
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